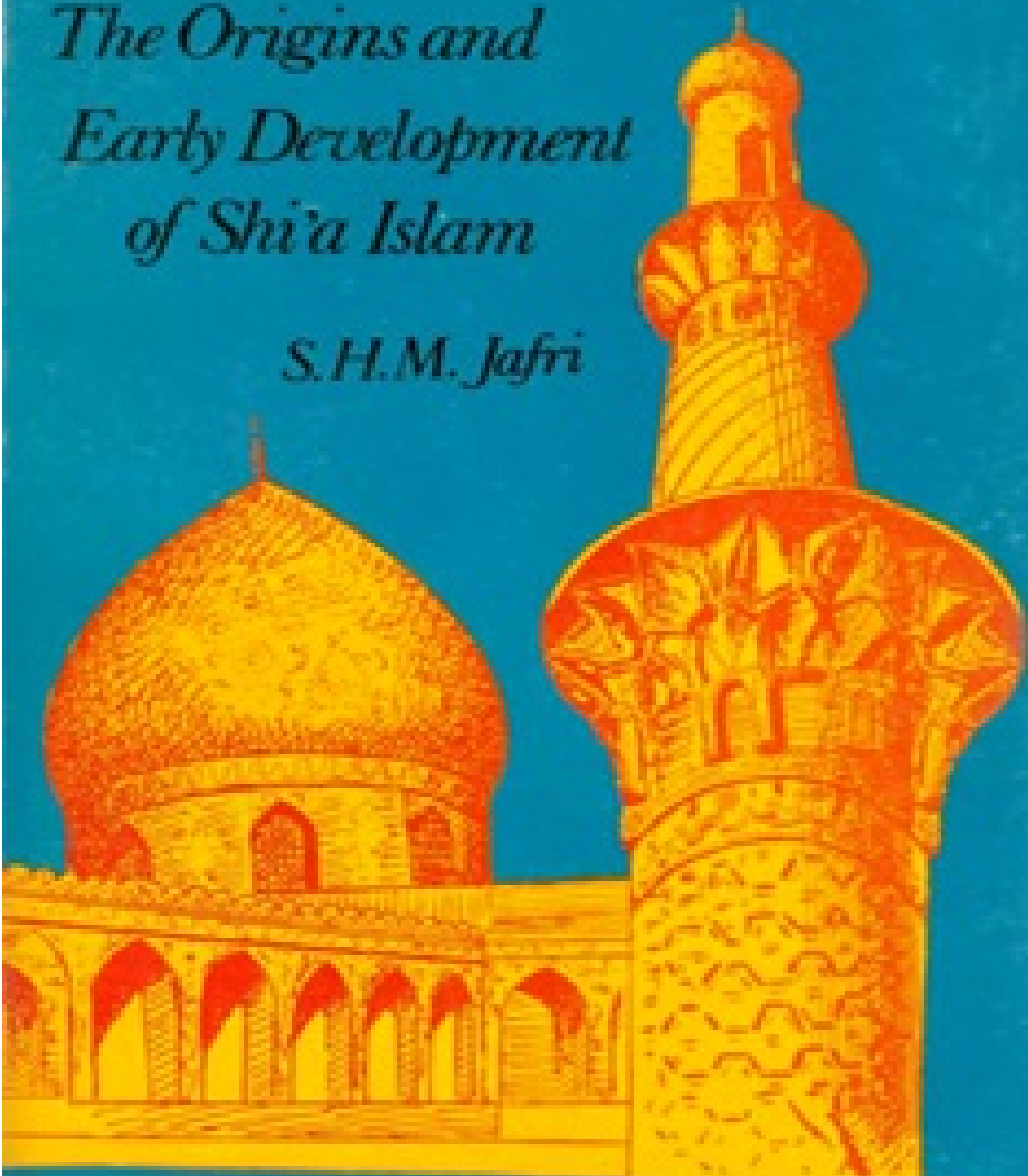
The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam

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point

This full length text is a very detailed and comprehensive history of the early stages of Shi'ism. The author has extensively used primary historical sources as well as more recent academic works in order to present one of the most detailed accounts of early Shi'ism that is available in the English language today.

Chapter 1: Conceptual Foundations

The division of the community of Islam into Sunni and Shi'i branches has commonly been explained in terms of purely political differences. Its origins have been attributed to basically political partisanship with regard to the leadership of the Umma, a partisanship which later exploded into conflict in the civil war between 'Ali and Mu'awiya.

This war not only established the Umayyads in power, but also supposedly marked the advent of Shi'ism as a religious movement divergent from the main body of believers. Such an interpretation grossly oversimplifies a very complex situation.

Those who thus emphasize the political nature of Shi'ism are perhaps too eager to project the modern Western notion of the separation of church and state back into seventh. century Arabian society, where such a notion would be not only foreign, but completely unintelligible. Such an approach also implies the spontaneous appearance of Shi'ism rather than its gradual emergence and development within Islamic society.

The recent occidental conception of “a purely spiritual movement” is exceptional. Throughout most of human history religion has been

intimately involved in the whole life of man in society, and not least in his politics. Even the purely religious teaching of Jesus–as it is commonly regarded–is not without its (political relevance.(١

Just as the Prophet was basically a religious and spiritual teacher and messenger and, at the same time, due to the circumstances, a temporal ruler and statesman, Islam has been since its very birth both a religious discipline and, so to speak, a socio-political movement. It is basically religious because of the status Muhammad attained as the Apostle of God appointed and sent by Him to deliver His message to mankind, and political because of the environment and circumstances in which it arose and .grew

Likewise Shi'ism, in its inherent nature, has always been both religious and political, and these co-existing aspects are found side by side throughout its history. It is therefore difficult to speak, at any stage of its existence, about the “political” Shi'a as distinct from the “religious” one. Throughout the first three or four centuries of Islamic religious and institutional development, one cannot fail to see that all religious .discussions among Muslims had both political and social relevance

When we analyse different possible relations which the religious beliefs and the political constitution in Islam bear to one another, we find the claims and the doctrinal trends of the supporters of 'Ali more inclined towards the religious aspects than the political ones; thus it seems paradoxical that the party whose claims were based chiefly on spiritual

W. Montgomery Watt, Islamic Political Thought (Edinburgh, ١٩۶٨), p.٢۶ -١

and religious considerations, as we shall examine in detail presently, should be .traditionally labelled as political in origin

The term Shi'a, keeping in view its historical development, must strictly be taken throughout this chapter in its literal meaning as followers, party, group, associates, partisans, or in a rather looser sense, the "supporters".(١) In these meanings the word (Shi'a occurs a number of times in the Qur'an.(٢

In its applied meaning as a particular designation for the followers of 'Ali and the people of his house, and thereby a distinct denomination within Islam against the Sunni, the term Shi'a was a later usage. In the infant years of Islamic history, one cannot speak of the so-called "orthodox" Sunna and the "heretical" Shi'a, but rather only of two ill-defined points of view that were nevertheless drifting steadily, and .finally irreconcilably, further apart

With this meaning of the term Shi'a in mind, our main purpose here is to trace the background of this support to 'All and to investigate its origins in the Arabian society of the day in the midst of which Islam arose. Consequently it will be illustrated how this .attitude became manifest as early as the death of the Prophet Muhammad

The starting point in any study of Shi'a Islam must, by historical necessity, be the nature and composition of the Muslim community which emerged at Medina under the leadership of Muhammad. This community was homogeneous neither in cultural background and traditions nor in politico-social institutions. The unification of different people or groups

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.See Lane, Lexicon, IV, pp.١۶٣٢ f -١

e.g. XIX, ۶۹; XXVIII, ۱۵; XXXVII, ۸۳ -۲

of people in a new system does not imply a complete elimination or even a change in .some of their deep-rooted values and traditions

It was therefore natural that certain values, ideas, and inclinations of different component parts of the Umma should reflect themselves in certain aspects of the new religious order. Consequently, rather than a homogeneous approach to all issues, especially of a non-fundamental nature, one must expect to find in the Umma a multiplicity of approaches and points of view, with the acceptance of Muhammad and .his mission being the fundamental factor binding the various groups together

The inclination of some of the Arabs from among the Companions of the Prophet to support 'Ali was thus a natural corollary of the already existing ideas prevalent among .the various Arab tribes who together constituted Muhammad's Umma at Medina

This Umma consisted of the Meccans, both from the Quraysh al-Bitah (those who inhabited the district immediately around the Ka'ba) and Quraysh az-Zawahir (those whose quarters were in the outskirts); of Medinese, who were divided into Aws and Khazraj, both tribes of the South Arabian stock and still preserving many of the characteristics of their original land; of the desert Arabs surrounding Med ma; and even of some Arabs and non- Arabs from distant places, such as Bilal of Abyssinia and .Salman of Persia

All of them together formed a common society under Islam, but when we consider a problem common among them we have to take into consideration the different temperaments

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and inclinations of each group, and not those of only one single people, group, or locality. We must presume that the Arabs of different origins and socio-cultural backgrounds understood Islam, at least in its early stage, according to their own

.social and moral ideas

Arab society, both nomadic and sedentary, was organized on a tribal basis, and of all the social bonds, loyalty to the tribe (al-'asabiya) was considered the most important. This feeling of al-'asabiya, along with other aspects of tribal life, provides the most .emphatic expression of and a constant theme for pre-Islamic poetry

The tribal system was based on the actual(۱) or fictitious descent from a common ancestor through whom the social and moral status of the members of the tribe was determined. People who could not boast of their ancestors as a symbol of greatness .were of little social standing and often subject to contempt

Knowledge and awareness of the common ancestor was therefore the central point in Arab social consciousness, and honour and glory of a tribe in comparison with any other tribe consisted of the honour and glory of its ancestors. Any claim to prestige and honour of the individual members as well as the whole tribe was perhaps .exclusively dependent on that of the ancestors

The word used for such claims is hasab, which is commonly explained by the Arab philologists in the meaning of enumeration of the famous deeds of ancestors. This does not mean that the word hasab excludes the enumeration of

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Ibn Qutayba, Rasa'il al-Bulagha', p. ۳۶۰ -۱

those ancestors themselves who figure in the genealogical tree in both paternal and (maternal descent.(۱

If the noble deeds of one's ancestors are numerous enough to be cited and boastfully enumerated by their descendants, the richer is their hasab or sharaf as is evident from a popular expression, al-hasab or sharaf al-dakham.(۲) This means a nobility which becomes “thicker” and stronger through accumulated noble deeds of ancestors

generation after generation.(۳) Thus sings the famous Arab poet Nabigha adh-Dhubyani:

"His father before him and his father's father built the glories of life as models."(۴)

A tribe with large numbers but few deeds of fame to its credit coming down from its ancestors was not only of less social standing but also subject to mockery from those who could enumerate more of their ancestors' noble deeds. So we hear from the poet Damra as he says:

"And the joint stock which they have begotten among the race of Sa'd and Malik: but some of the fire-sticks of the tribe fail to light and are nothing worth."(۵) [۹]

In a rigidly tribal system such as that of the Arabs, the fame of ancestors for noble deeds was the foremost source of pride and of claim to superiority. Nobility thus derived, a tribe considered it a constellatory factor in claiming its higher position in relation to other tribes.

Within a tribe a particular clan had higher claim to glory, and therefrom to leadership, if its direct line of ancestors was more distinguished by their noble deeds in relation to

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۱- Aghani, I, p.۴۵

۲- Aghani, I, p.۷۲; Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan, III, p.۵۱۹

۳- Aghani, X, p.۳۰۰

۴- Diwan an-Nabhiga adh-Dhubyani, ed. Shukri Faysal (Beirut, ۱۹۶۸), p.۱۶۵

۵- Mufaddaliyat, XCIII, V.۱۴

other clans of the same tribe. This fame of ancestors was not mere genealogical ornament to the descendants but had individual relevance to each man and was of great significance in the claim of individual honour.(۱)

Thus, for example, Nu'man b. al-Mundhir, King of Hira, asked Amir b. Uhaymir b. Bahdala, who had claimed the highest rank among all present, "Are you then the noblest of all Arabs in respect of your tribe?" He replied, "The Ma'add excel in nobility and number, and amongst them the Nizar, and amongst them the Mudar, and amongst them the Khindif, amongst whom the Tamim, and amongst these the 'Awf, within 'Awf the family of Bahdala. He who does not admit this may contest with me."(۲)

Not only physical characteristics were considered by the Arabs to be hereditary;(۳) they firmly believed that noble qualities as well were inherent in certain stocks. Moral qualities thus being genetically transmitted, the best virtues for an individual were therefore only those which were handed down to him from his noble ancestors.

The Arabs made a clear distinction between inherited nobility and nobility claimed only on account of personal merit, the former being a source of great social prestige while the latter was of little consequence. In other words, personal fame and merit counted for little in securing for oneself an exalted position; it was inherited fame and inherited merit which confirmed proper estimation in the society.(۴)

There are numerous references in pre-Islamic poetry where ancestral nobility and virtues are

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۱- Mufaddaliyat, XXXI, v.۴: "By God, my cousin, thou art not better in stock than I, (La afdalta fi hasabi)"

۲- Ibn Qutayba, op. cit., p.۳۴۸; 'Iqd, III, p.۳۳۲

۳- Aghani, I, p.۳۱

۴- Amr b. Kulthum, Mu'allaqa, vv. ۴۰, ۵۲, ۵۵; Mufaddaliyat, XL, v.۴۴; LXXXVII, v.۲; Zuhayr'

b. Abi Salma, Mu'allaqa, v, p.۲۶; Aghani, X, p.۳۰۰

described as a strong and lofty building which they built for their descendants(۱) and which it would be shameful for the latter to destroy.(۲) Ancestral fame of nobility and virtuous deeds must therefore be preserved as the strongest and most continuous .incentive to be adopted by the descendants

It was in this sense that the term Sunna had frequently been used long before Islam.(۳) After Islam the institution of Sunna remained as forceful as ever, but its content was drastically replaced by the Prophetic Sunna. Nevertheless certain trends of the original Sunna did persist, at least in certain sections of the Arab-Muslim .community

The most privileged in Arab society, in the midst of which Islam arose, was therefore the one who could boast publicly that he was destined to have ancestors who had nothing undistinguished to leave to him as their Sunna. A word commonly used to express the idea of ability to trace moral qualities back to one's noble ancestors is 'irq, .((p۱. a'raq and 'uruq

Irq means root, origin of a man, and its plural a'raq signifies ancestors of a man. Thus' frequent expressions of a man's inheritance from noble ancestors are found in phrases such as, "he has an hereditary share in generousness or nobleness,"(۴) or ("noble blood lifted him up to his ancestors."(۵

It is clear that in the religious sentiments of the Arabs, ancestral piety, noble deeds, and moral qualities as Sunna played an important role. The religion of the Arabs, which varied in strength and

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Labid, Mu'allaqa, v.۸۳; 'Amr b. Kulthum, Mu'allaqa, v.۵۲ -۱
Aghani, XXII, p. iii -۲

Labid, op. cit., v. ٨I -٣

Lane, Lexicon, V, pp.٢٠٢٠ ff -۴

Yaqut, op. cit., III, p.۴٧I -۵

importance from locality to locality throughout the peninsula, was originally the worship of tribal symbols, which later became identified with certain forces of nature .represented by numerous deities

The tribal deity, symbolized in the sacred stone (nasab), was called the lord (rabb) of its temple. Allah, the supreme deity of the Meccan sanctuary, was described as Rabb al-Ka'ba or Rabb Hadha al-Bayt.(١) It is important to note that the word rabb often .referred not to the deity but to the person in charge of the sanctuary

There was no organized priestly hierarchy, but certain clans acted as guardians of the sanctuaries. This guardianship passed from one generation to another, together with (the reputation for hereditary sanctity.(٢

This sanctity, which had its original source in the magical power attributed to the idol which they served, was strictly connected with the idea of nobility of race (sharaf) .synonymous with the pride of descent from noble ancestors

The nobility of the clan being hereditary, the priestly clans of long standing represented the highest aristocracy in pre-Islamic Arabia. Traces of this sort of aristocracy are to be found in the belief of the Arabs, especially of the South, that .members of certain families have a charisma or spiritual power, or sharaf

The guardianship of a sanctuary, a “house” (Bayt), and “honour” (sharaf) came to be understood as being inseparable.(٣) As a result, priesthood in Arabia was very often combined with tribal leadership, even with kingship. We may go even further by stating that political leadership

Qur'an, CVI, ۳ -۱

Ibn Hisham, I, p.۱۲۶; 'Iqd, III, p.۳۳۳ -۲

On this see R. B. Serjeant's "Haram and Hawtah, The Sacred Enclave in Arabia", in -۳ Melanges Taha Husain, ed. 'Abd al-Rahman Badawi (Cairo, ۱۹۶۲), pp.۴۲ f.; and "The Saiyids of Hadramawt", BSOAS, XXI (London, ۱۹۵۷); also Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqaq, p.۱۷۳

.there was originally of a religious and priestly nature

The South Arabian monarchial institution of the mukarrib is a clear proof of the office of the priest-king who embraces at once religious and temporal authority. The clans of political rulers could have attained the status of great nobility after first acquiring power by political means, but nevertheless, they could not equal the sacerdotal lineages; for example, the kings of Kinda ranked only after the three most noble .priestly houses

These three houses, "after the house of Hashim b. 'Abd Manaf amongst the Quraysh", were Az-Zurara b. 'Udas of the Tamim, Al-Hudhayfa b. Badr of the Fazari tribe, and Dhu'l-Jaddayn b. 'Abd Allah b. Hammam of the Shayban tribe. "And as far as the Kinda were concerned they were not counted amongst the ahi-al-buyutat, even though (they were the kings."(۱)

It is apparent that not only was priestly status the foundation of political leadership, but when the latter was attained by men of non-priestly clans, it imposed upon them religious functions. They were also mediators between men and deities. As a result, .the idea of tribal leadership and service to the God became synonymous

Those who led the tribe were of necessity the guardians of the tribal bayt. They were the ahl al-bayt, the "people of the house", or the bayt of such and such a tribe.(۲) Together these leading clans formed the noble estate of Arabia, the buyutat al-'Arab. (۲۴). Even later, when the meaning of the ahl al-bayt became limited to the

.Ibn Durayd, op. cit., p.۲۳۸; Aghani; XIX, p.۱۲۸; Iqd, III, pp.۳۳۱ if -۱
Ibn Hisham, I, pp. ۱۴۳, ۱۴۵; 'Iqd, III, pp. ۳۱۳, ۳۳۳ if; Ibn Durayd, loc. cit.; Serjeant, -۲ .“Haram and Hawtah”, p.۴۳

descendants of the Prophet, the term Buyutat al-'Arab survived into later centuries in the sense of the tribal aristocracy and nobility.(۱)

It is against this background that we have to consider the status of the Banu Hashim, not only among the people of Mecca but in a wider circle due to their vast contacts with the people of different places through the yearly fair of Ukaz and the pilgrimage .to the Ka'ba

Some western scholars have sceptically questioned whether the ancestors of Muhammad were really as important in dignity, nobility, and influence as the sources suggest, and they usually claim that the importance of the Banu Hashim has in fact .been grossly exaggerated

The basis of this doubt is that the 'Abbasids were descendants of Hashim, whereas the rivals whom they ousted, the Umayyads, were the descendants of 'Abd Shams, and that the latter have been treated unsympathetically by the historians who .happened to write under the 'Abbasid regime

For this reason, it is claimed that Hashim and his family, the ancestors of the 'Abbasid caliphs, had been given greater prominence in extant histories than they really .possessed

This entire hypothesis, however, is open to considerable criticism. Scrutiny of the sources suggests that this has not happened to any appreciable extent, and that there are no grounds for assuming any serious falsification or large scale invention in presenting Muhammad's ancestry.(۲)

There is no need to go as far back as Qusayy, father of 'Abd ad-Dar and 'Abd Manaf, whom unanimous historical testimony presents

۱- Serjeant, loc. cit.

۲- See W. Montgomery Watt, Muhammad at Mecca (Oxford, ۱۹۵۳), p.۳۱; Serjeant, “The Saiyids of Hadramawt”, p.۷

as the unrivalled supreme authority of Mecca both in religion and in political matters.(۱)

After the death of Qusayy, 'Abd ad-Dar inherited his father's authority, but he died early and his sons were too young to effectively maintain their rights. 'Abd Manaf, the younger son of Qusayy, had been the powerful rival of his elder brother and ultimately concentrated some of the chief offices of his father in his person after the death of 'Abd ad-Dar.(۲)

Eventually the sons of 'Abd Manaf inherited their father's influence; among them, Hashim, though the youngest, was entrusted with the most honourable offices pertaining to the Ka'ba, ar-r:fdha and as-siqaya: providing food and water to the pilgrims.(۳)

There are no serious grounds to doubt the accounts given by the early tradition that Hashim achieved great success and glory in his lifetime by his acts of public welfare and by his splendid hospitality extended to the pilgrims visiting the Ka'ba from all parts of Arabia.(۴)

When Hashim died, he was replaced by his brother AI-Muttalib. For a short time it seems that the fortunes of the family were declining under the leadership of Al-Muttalib, but they soon recovered under Hashim's son 'Abd al-Muttalib, who had been brought up in Medina with his mother and then brought to Mecca by his uncle Al-Muttalib.(۵)

The other sons of Hashim having died without male issue, 'Abd al-Muttalib took

charge of the family's affairs, which meant the de facto merger of the Banu Hashim and Banu 'Abd al-Muttalib. This is not

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۱- Ibn Hisham, I, pp.۱۳۱ ff.; Azraqi, Akhbar Makkah, I, pp.۶۴ ff.; Ibn Sa'd, I, pp. ۶q ff.; 'Iqd, III, pp. ۳۱۲ f.

۲- Ibn Sa'd, I, p. ۷۴. Azraqi, Akhbar, I, p.۶۶, states that 'Abd Manaf possessed not Only ar-rifada and al-siqaya, but also Al-qiyada, leadership of Mecca.

۳- Ibn Hisham, I, pp. ۱۴۳ f.; Ibn Sa'd, I, p.۷۸. Azraqi, Akhbar, I, p.۶۷, says that after 'Abd Manaf, the offices of ar-rifada and as-siqaya passed to Hashim, and that of al-qiyada was given to 'Abd Shams.

۴- Ibn Hisham, loc. cit.; Ibn Sa'd, loc. cit

۵- Ibn Hisham, I, pp.۱۴۵ f.; Ibn Sa'd, I, pp. ۸I if.

the place to discuss whether or not the family of Hashim at that time was as prosperous and influential in Meccan internal affairs as it used to be. The same sources which are too often suspected of being biased in presenting Muhammad's ancestors in unduly favourable circumstances do not hesitate to relate how 'Abd al-Muttalib faced serious set-backs at the beginning of his career.

The grand offices of ar-rifada and as-siqaya secured for the house of Hashim a commanding and permanent influence, and it seems natural that by the virtue of these offices a widespread fame abroad must have guaranteed to the family at least some regard in Mecca. 'Abd al-Muttalib seems to have been a man of initiative and energy,(۱) necessary prerequisites to become a man of consequence in the Meccan merchant aristocracy.

He greatly enhanced his position by restoring the ancient well of Zamzam. In the course of time, he became the chief custodian of the Ka'ba and was also regarded as a renowned judge of the customary law.

Because of his position as the sole person in charge of the main services pertaining to the most respected sanctuary of the Peninsula, he became one of the most, if not the

most, prominent figures of Mecca. We are told by Ibn Sa'd and Ibn Hashim that "he was the leader of the Quraysh until his death," and that "his greatness in honour (sharaf) attained an exalted position which no one from amongst his fathers had reached before him. He

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Cf. Montgomery Watt, Muhammad at Mecca, p.۳۱ -۱

(commanded great respect and the love of his people."(۱

After 'Abd al-Muttalib's death, his eldest surviving son Abu Talib inherited his father's position. It seems, however, that Abu Talib did not prove himself to be of that same calibre and energy as his father and grandfathers, and consequently the family lost much of that power and command which it had previously enjoyed in the inner circle (of Meccan aristocratic society.(۲

Nevertheless it does not necessarily follow that the material decline of the family's fortunes should have deprived it, in the minds of the people, of the memory of their .immediate past

The regard for a successor of three or four illustrious generations could not have faded so soon, especially among groups beyond Mecca. The sanctuary of the Ka'ba, a shrine of extreme antiquity, was a highly important and popular centre of worship in the Peninsula,(۳) and its offices of as-siqaya and imarat al-bayt (keeper of the Ka'ba) (are noted in the Qur'an.(۴

Supplying the pilgrims with water must have been a lucrative job in Mecca, where water is so scarce, and the water of Zamzam, which soon shared in the sacredness of the sanctuary, was required not only by the yearly pilgrims but also by the huge trade (caravans halting at Mecca.(۵

Many early writers have recorded detailed accounts of the universal influence of the

Ka'ba, of the vast contacts of the people of Mecca due to its being a centre for the trade caravans from Yaman in the South, from

p: ۱۴

Ibn Sa'd, I, p. ۸۵; Ibn Hisham, I, p.۱۵۰ -۱

"Cf. EI۲ article "Abu Talib -۲

A recurrent theme in the Qur'an, best illustrated in II, I۲۶-۷ -۳

IX, ۱۹ -۴

See Muhammad Hamidullah, "The City State of Mecca", IC, XII (۱۹۳۸), p. ۲۶۶ -۵

Dumat al-Jandal in the extreme North, and from other far-off places, and of the Ukaz, .the greatest of the Arabs' yearly fairs

It is therefore natural that the honorific services attached to the sanctuary and rendered by the house of Hashim for such a long period must have extended the family's fame and prestige over a very wide area as the pilgrims and the caravans left .Mecca

We can thus conclude that at the time of Muhammad's emergence, his family must have retained the glory and memory of the long-standing sacerdotal lineage of Hashim even though the family's material and political fortunes were at a low ebb at .that time

Psychologically at least, the works and deeds of three generations cannot be obliterated from the consciousness of the people abroad by the sudden decline in wealth and political power of the present generation at Mecca. The Banu Hashim were commonly recognized by the Arabs as the guardians of the Temple, the Ahl al-Bayt, of Mecca.(۱)

It was in this family background that Muhammad arose as the Messenger of God and restorer of the true religious Sunna of Abraham and Ishmael(۲) which had been

corrupted and distorted by the people through the ages. Abraham was not only recognized by the Arabs as their tribal father and progenitor but was also acknowledged by them as the founder of the sanctuary of the Ka'ba and of Mecca.

This tradition was no Muslim legend. If it had not been an accepted truth long before Muhammad's

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۱- Ibn Hisham, I, p.۱۴۵; Tabari, I, pp.۲۷۸۶ f.
۲- Qur'an, II, ۱۳۵-۷

time, it could not have been referred to in the Qur'an as an acknowledged fact; nor could certain spots around the pre-Islamic Ka'ba have been connected, as we know them to have been, with the names of Abraham and Ishmael.(۱)

Muhammad was fully conscious of this popular and deep-rooted tradition of Abraham's association with the Ka'ba, with which the Arabs in general and Muhammad's four generations of predecessors in particular were so closely linked. Ibn Khaldun points out that it was regarded as something extraordinary and most honourable if the leadership continued in one and the same family for four generations.(۲)

All the factors discussed above combine to form an inseparable background against which the problem of succession to Muhammad has to be considered. As has been pointed out above, this problem must not be considered only from the point of view of seventh century Meccan society, for the Umma of Muhammad at the time of his death was composed of people of a variety of background, values, and ideas, drawn from different parts of Arabia.

It was, therefore, natural that different people should view the problem from different angles. The way in which the problem of succession was solved in the

assembly of Saqifa between the death and the burial of the Prophet will be discussed below. It will suffice here to note in passing that the decision taken in Saqifa was also in conformity with the common practice and ancient tradition of the Arabs, at least of one important group

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ibid., II, ١٢۵ -١

Ibn Khaldun, Proleg., I, p.٢٨٩. Cf. Von Kremer, Staatsidee des Islam; trans. Khuda -٢ Bukhsh, Politics in Islam (Lahore, ١٩٢٠), p. IO

.from among them

The two main constituent groups of the Umma at the time of Muhammad's death were the Arabs of northern and central Arabia, of whom the tribe of the Quraysh was the most important and dominant, and the people of South Arabian origin, the Banu Qayla, whose two major branches, the Aws and the Khazraj, were settled in Yathrib.

They were known as the ansar, or "helpers", because they gave Muhammad and Islam a shelter and a home at the most critical moment of the Prophet's mission. Differences in almost all aspects of life-social, cultural, economic, religious, geographical, and even presumably racial and ancestral- between the Arabs of the South and the North are too well known to need elaboration here at length. Goldziher,(١) Wellhausen,(٢) Nicholson,(٣) and many other outstanding scholars have thoroughly studied the subject in depth.

It should, however, be pointed out that to consider all the Arabs as one single cultural group is a grave mistake. They had never been so. The North was cut off from the centre by the desert as the South was separated from the rest of Arabia by the Rub 'al-Khali.

Widely different geographical and eco- nomic conditions played their inevitable and

natural role in every aspect of development of the two kindred races. The Arabs of northern and central Arabia, the Hijaz, and the highlands of Najd, developed along different lines from the southern Arabs of Al-Yaman in character, way of life, and socio-political and socio-religious institutions. Ag in all

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Muhammedanische Studien, trans. S. M. Stern and C. R. Barber, Muslim Studies - ١ (London, ١٩۶٧), I, pp.٧٩-١٠٠

The Arab Kingdom and Its Fall, trans. M. Weir (Calcutta, ١٩٢٧), passim -٢

A Literary History of the Arabs (Cambridge, ١٩۶٩), pp. I ff -٣

other aspects of life, the two groups differed widely from each other in religious .sensitivity and feelings

Among the people of the much more advanced and civilized provinces of South Arabia there was a clear predominance of religious ideas, whereas among the people of the North religious sentiments were evidently lacking. A South Arabian prince, for example, in his votive inscriptions thanked the gods who made him victorious over his enemies, and warriors erected votive memorials to their divine helper for any success .they achieved

In general the thankful and submissive feeling towards the gods is the basic theme of the existent South Arabian monuments. In sharp contrast to this, the warriors of northern Arabia boasted of their heroic courage and the bravery of their companions. They did not feel obliged to thank divine powers for their success, though they did not altogether refuse to acknowledge such powers.(١)

Even the scanty traces of lukewarm religious sentiments amongst the northern Arabs cannot be dissociated from the influence of the southern Arabs settled down in the North.(٢) This difference in religious sentiments was naturally reflected in their pattern of tribal leadership. The chiefs or the sheikhs in the North had always been elected on a principle of seniority in age and ability in leadership. There might sometimes be other considerations, such as nobility and lineal prestige, but in the

.North these were of less importance

The Arabs in the South were, on the other hand, accustomed to hereditary succession in leadership based on

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Goldziher, Muslim Studies, I, pp.١٢-١٣ -١
ibid., p.١۴ -٢

hereditary sanctity. Because of this fact the South Arabian tribes of the Aws and the Khazraj at Yathrib presented an atmosphere more easily conducive to the religious thought which was of great importance in Muhammad's success. Thus we may assume that the majority of the North Arabians understood Islam, at least at the first stage of their acceptance of it, as a socio-political discipline based on the religion .taught by the Prophet, since they had been lukewarm to religious impulses

The Aws and the Khazraj, South Arabian in origin, understood Islam as basically a religious discipline coupled with a socio-political movement, since in their cultural past, though remote, they

had been more sensitive to religion. It was only a matter of emphasis in approach and .understanding, at least at the first spontaneous response

When the Prophet died the question of his succession was therefore understood to combine in it both political and religious leadership, a principle well known to the Arabs though naturally with different degrees of emphasis on one or the other of these two aspects. To some it was more political than religious; to others it was more religious .than political

The majority of the Muslims, who readily accepted Abu Bakr, laid more emphasis on the sociopolitical side in accepting the customary procedure of succession to the chieftainship in its new interpretation given by the first caliph, as we shall examine

below. They largely, if not solely, disregarded the religious principle and the idea of the hereditary sanctity of a certain

p: ١٩

house. This assumption is strongly supported by the statement of 'Umar b. al-Khattab to Ibn 'Abbas, "The people do not like having the prophethood. and caliphate combined in the Banu Hishim."(١)

We must assume that both 'Umar and Abu Bakr were well aware of the importance which the idea of inherited sanctity held in one section of the Umma. At the same time they must have realized that should the election of Abu Bakr be open to doubt, the unity of the Umma would be seriously endangered. They nevertheless considered it necessary to dissociate the caliphate from the priesthood of the Ka'ba, which was enshrined in the hereditary sanctity of the Banu Hashim.

There were others, especially of South Arabian origin; who felt that in Mecca leadership, together with priestly prerogatives, was inherited in the clan of 'Abd Manaf by the Hashimites,(٢) though after the death of 'Abd al-Muttalib they were overshadowed by the clan of Umayya in political matters. The rise of Muhammad as the Prophet of God and the supreme authority in Arabia again brought the Banu Hashim to power, a fact acknowledged by Abu Sufyan's surrender to the Prophet at the fall of Mecca.

To some of the Companions, therefore, a normal logical choice of successor would have been another Hashimite, and the entire question of succession to the leadership of the Muslim community was, for them, a problem of great religious significance. In addition to political expediency, deep-rooted religious considerations had to be taken into account by

p: ٢٠

١- Tabari, I, p.٢٧۶٩ f.

٢- Most of the supporters of 'Ali in the early disagreement over the caliphate were of

South Arabian origin and were quite clear in their Defence of 'Ali's claims on religious grounds. [۴۸] III, ۳۳

.certain of the Companions

These, whom we may call more legalistically minded individuals, could not agree to the interpretation given by Abu Bakr and his supporters, because, as we shall see below, they understood the leadership of the community as above all a religious office. To them Muhammad was the restorer of the true religion of Abraham and Ishmael, and so in him the hereditary sanctity of his clan reached its highest level. This :idea was also strongly supported by the Qur'an when it declared, for example

Verily, God has chosen Adam and Noah, the family of Abraham and the family of" ['Imran above all people."'[۴۸

The commentators have all unanimously explained that Muhammad belonged to the "family of Abraham" referred to in this verse. Thus when he died his successor could only be a man from the same family and endowed with the same qualities by the .same principles

In this respect, there must be noted the Qur'anic concept of the exalted and virtuous family, whose favour in the eyes of God derives from their righteous deeds and services in the cause of God. In all ages the prophets have been particularly concerned with ensuring that the special favour of God bestowed upon them for the guidance of man be maintained in their families and pass to their progeny. The Qur'an repeatedly speaks of the prophets praying to God for their progeny and asking Him to .continue His guidance in their lineages

In the answer to these prayers, the verses

p: ۲۱

of the Qur'an bear direct testimony to the special favour of God being granted to the

direct descendants of the prophets to keep their fathers' covenants intact, to become true examples of their fathers' righteousness, and to keep fast to the path of righteousness set by these prophets. Four terms are repeatedly used in the Qur'an to express God's special favour for the descendants of the prophets: Dhurriya, Al Ahl, .and Qurba

The word Dhurriya, meaning offspring, progeny, or direct descendant, has been used in thirty-two verses of the Qur'an. It is used either in direct connection with the prophets' own concern that their children should remain on their path or that their work of guidance should be continued through their own progeny. Often the word is used in verses where the prophets claim that God had selected them to become models of righteousness based on their direct descent from other prophets. This concern for a prophet's progeny is reflected in a verse (II, ١٢۴) where Abraham was :told by God

I will make you an Imam of the people." Whereupon Abraham pleads, "And what" ".about my offspring (Dhurriyati)?" God replies, "My covenant will not go to evildoers

:In a similar verse (XIV, ٣٧) Abraham prays to God

Oh my Lord God! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without" cultivation by the Sacred House, in order, Oh Lord, that they may establish regular prayer: so fill the hearts of some among men with love towards them

p: ٢٢

".and feed them with fruits: so that they may give thanks

:(This prayer is favourably answered when God declares (XIX, ۵٨

There are they on whom God bestowed His bounties from the prophets of the" posterity of Adam; and of those whom we carried with Noah [in the Ark] and of the ".posterity (Dhurriya) of Abraham and Israel and of those whom we guided and chose

The term Al, meaning nearer or nearest relations by descent from the same father or ancestor or a man's family or kinsmen, is used in the Qur'an twenty-six times in connection with the descendants of the prophets or those who succeeded them in guidance and special favour from God. A verse describing Muhammad as belonging to the descendants of Abraham has been quoted above. In another verse (IV, ۵۴) we :read

Or do they envy the people for what God has given them of His grace: But indeed we" have given to Abraham's children (Al Ibrahim) the book and the wisdom and we gave ".them a great kingdom

The word Ahl, which is used many times in the Qur'an, has almost the same meaning as Al, though it is also used in a broader sense in referring to the people of a town or inhabitation, a group, or followers. When used in conjunction with the term bayt: Ahl al-bayt, it refers to the immediate descendants of a family or such a family of the same "house", or bayt. In this compound form, Ahl al-bayt is used in the

Qur'an especially in reference to the immediate family of Muhammad. In verse :XXXIII, ۳۳, we hear

And God only wishes to remove from you [all kinds of] uncleanliness, O members of" ".the family [of Muhammad] and thoroughly purify you

All the commentators of the Qur'an are unanimous in the opinion that the term Ahl al-

bayt in this verse refers to Muhammad's daughter Fatima, his cousin and son-in-law .'Ali, and his two beloved grandsons, Hasan and Husayn

The fourth term, Qurba (from the root qaruba, nearness), means near or blood relationship, relatives, or kinsmen. As is the case with the term AM al۴ayt, the term Qurba was also used specifically for the immediate relatives of Muhammad. Thus the :Qur'an (XLII, ۲۳) reads

That is the bounty whereof God gives glad tidings to his servants who believe and do' righteous deeds. “Say, [O Muhammad] I do not ask any reward from you for this ”.[apostleship] except the love of [my] relatives

Commenting on this verse, the commentators are again unanimous in their opinion that the word Qurba refers to Muhammad's relatives—Fatima, 'Ali, Hasan, and .Husayn

The only point of disagreement arises in that the Sunni commentators include the .wives of the Prophet, whereas the Shi'i writers do not

The total number of verses that mention special favour requested for and granted to the families of the various prophets by God runs to over a hundred in the Qur'an. From this we may draw two conclusions. If one accepts the axiom that the Qur'an was revealed in terms

p: ۲۴

understandable in the cultural atmosphere of seventh-century Arabia, then it is obvious that the idea of the sanctity of a prophet's family was a commonly accepted principle at that time. Even more important is the fact that the Qur'an's constant repetition of this idea must have left the impression among some of the Muslims that .Muhammad's family had a religious prerogative over others

Neither Banu Taym b. Murra, the clan of Abu Bakr, nor Banu 'Adi b. Ka'b, the people of Umar, had ever been regarded with esteem on any religious grounds, thus those who laid stress on the religious principle could not accept them as candidates for succession to Muhammad. The candidate could come only from the Banu Hashim, and amongst them the figure of 'Ali was by far the most prominent. Re too was the great-grandson of Hashim and the grandson of 'Abd al-Muttalib.

He was the son of Abu Talib, Muhammad's uncle, who had given the Prophet the care and love of the father Muhammad had lost before birth. 'Ali was the nearest and closest associate of Muhammad, for the Prophet had acted as his guardian during the famine of Mecca, and he had subsequently adopted him as a brother both before the Hijra and again in Medina.(۱)

He was the first male to embrace Islam,[۵۰] Khadija being the first woman. He was also the husband of Fatima, the Prophet's only surviving daughter, and by her fathered two of the Prophet's grandsons, Al-Hasan and Al-Husayn, both of whom

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۱- [۵۰] Ibn Hisham, I, pp.۲۶۲ f.; II, pp.۱۵۰ f.; Baladhuri, I, p.۲۷۰; Ibn Habib, Muhabbar, p.۷۰ According to Ibn Ishaq, 'Ali was ten years old at the time when Muhammad received his first revelation and was the first who prayed with the Prophet and Khadija (Ibn Hisham, I, p.۲۶۲; Baladhuri, I, p. ۱۱۲). Those comparatively few early writers who mention Abu Bakr as the first Muslim among men do so because of 'Ali's young age. See Isti' ab, III, Pp.۱۰۹۰ ff., which gives numerous traditions with different isnads supporting the view that 'Ali was the first male to accept Islam and to pray with Muhammad, whereas Abu Bakr was the first to publicly announce his Islam.

Muhammad loved dearly.

It seems that these inherent personal qualities and virtues secured 'Ali a unique and advantageous place over all other family members and companions of Muhammad, and earned him a group of friends who were devoted to him with a special zeal and .consideration even during the lifetime of the Prophet

Perhaps it is because of this that the Shi'a claim the existence of Shi'ism even in the lifetime of the Prophet; the earliest heresiographers, Sa'd al-Ash'ari and An-Nawbakhti, clearly state that Shi'ism (in the sense of a particular regard and appreciation of 'Ali's personal merits) had already appeared in Muhammad's (lifetime.(۱

Moreover, this idea of 'Ali's superior qualifications for the caliphate was further strengthened by a series of events which took place during the Prophet's life in which he showed some special consideration for 'Ali. A few of these should be pointed out as :illustrations of 'Ali's growth in prestige and favour

At the very beginning of his mission, when the verse "Warn your tribe, the nearest (۱ kinsmen" (XXVI, ۲۱۴) was revealed (about three years after Muhammad's first revelation and the conversion of Khadija, 'Ali, and Abu Bakr), the Prophet gathered all .the Banu 'Abd al-Muttalib and informed them of his mission

Explaining his task, he asked for support and help in furthering the cause. Instead of assistance, the Prophet received only ridicule; the only exception was 'Ali, who, (though only thirteen years old, gave the Prophet his enthusiastic support.(۲

The prerogative of the religious brotherhood between (۲

Sa'd al-Ash'ari, Firaq, p. ۱۵; Nawbakhti, Firaq, p.۲۳ -۱

Mas'udi, Muruj, II, p.۲۷۷. Also See commentaries of Tabari Ibn Kathir, and Tha'labi -۲ under verse ۲۱۴, Sura XXVI

Ali and Muhammad, which has already been mentioned above, must be taken into' special account in this series of events The Prophet adopted 'Ali as his brother in faith (ukhuwwa) both before the Hijra and again in Medina. This was such a recognized .historical fact that no historian has denied it

Ali's position can only have been elevated in the eyes of the Companions when he' (۳ was appointed by Muhammad as the standard bearer at both Badr and Khaybar and (in other wars.(۱

The nomination of 'Ali by the Prophet as his deputy at Medina during the expedition (۴ to Tabuk was another important record to 'Ali's credit. (۲) It was on this occasion that the famous tradition is reported in which Muhammad said to 'Ali, "You are to me what (Aaron was to Moses except that there will be no Prophet after me."(۳

This tradition attached to the event of Tabuk has been recorded by almost all historians and traditionists, and when we see that Muhammad was referring to many similarities in his person and mission with other great prophets of the past, we find no .difficulty in accepting this tradition

In one of the several Qur'anic passages dealing with this subject (XX, ۲۰۳۲), Moses :asks of God

And give me a minister from my family, Aaron, my brother; add to my strength" ".through him, and make him share my task

Muhammad's comparison of himself with Moses would thus have been incomplete without an Aaron, and obviously no other person

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Ibn Hisham, II, p.۲۶۴; III, p.۳۴۹; Isti 'ab, III, p.۱۰۹۷; 'Iqd, IV, p.۳۱۲ -۱

Ibn Hisham, IV, p.۱۶۳ -۲

Ibn Hisham, loc. cit.; Bukhari, Sahih, II, p.۱۹۴; Nawbakhti, Firaq, p.۱۹; 'Iqd, IV, p.۳۱۱; -۳
.Isti 'ab, III, pp.۱۰۹۹ f

.in his family but 'Ali could serve him as Aaron

Yet another very important event was the communication of the chapter of al- (۵ Bara'a (Qur'an, IX). In the ninth year of the Hijra, the Prophet sent Abu Bakr to lead the people in the Hajj. After Abu Bakr's departure to Mecca the chapter of Bara'a was .revealed to the Prophet to communicate to the people, especially to the polytheists

When people asked the Prophet whether he would dispatch the chapter to Abu Bakr to deliver it on his behalf, he replied, "No, I will not send it except through someone from amongst the people of my family (rajul-un min ahli bayti)." The Prophet then called 'Ali and ordered him to take his own camel and go to Mecca at once and deliver (the Qur'anic message to the people on his behalf.(۱

There are no serious grounds to doubt the authenticity of these events, which have been recorded by writers of all schools of thought and which also seem plausible in their context. Even if one is inclined to extreme caution and scepticism, it cannot be denied that these events in favour of 'Ali were in such wide circulation that the .majority of historians and traditionists from the earliest times had to record them

In this series of events, the famous but controversial tradition of Ghadir Khum, upon which the Shi'a place the utmost importance, has been intentionally ignored. This event is named after a place called Ghadir Khum, a pool or

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(Ibn Hisham, IV, p.۱۹۰ (repeated by the majority of historians and traditionists -۱

a marsh with some shady trees, situated only a few miles from Mecca on the road to

.Medina, from where people disperse to their different destinations

When Muhammad was returning from his Farewell Pilgrimage he stopped at Ghadir Khum on ۱۸ Dhu'l-Hijja (۱۰ March ۶۳۲) to make an announcement to the pilgrims who accompanied him from Mecca and who were to disperse from this junction. By the orders of the Prophet, a special dais or pulpit made of branches of the trees was erected for him. After the noon prayer the Prophet sat on the pulpit and made his last .public address to the largest gathering before his death three months later

Taking 'Ali by the hand, Muhammad asked his followers whether he was not superior in authority and person (awla) to the believers themselves. The crowd cried out in one voice: "It is so, O Apostle of God." He then declared: "He of whom I am the mawla [the patron, master, leader, friend?], of him 'Ali is also the mawla (man kuntu mawlahu fa 'Ali-un mawlahu). O God, be the friend of him who is his friend, and be the enemy of ".(him who is his enemy (Allahumma wali man walahu wa 'adi man adahu

As far as the authenticity of the event itself is concerned, it has hardly ever been denied or questioned even by the most conservative Sunni authorities, who have themselves recorded it. Most noteworthy among them are Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal in ,his Musnad, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i

p: ۲۹

Ibn Maja, Abu Da'ud and almost all other Sunan writers, Ibn al-Athir in his Usd al-Ghaba Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in his Isti 'ab, followed by all other writers of biographical works and even Ibn 'Abd Rabbih in his 'Iqd al-Farid, and Jahiz. in his 'Uthmaniyya.(۱)

The traditions of Ghadir are so abundantly reported and so commonly attested by hundreds of different transmitters belonging to all schools of thought that it would be futile to doubt their authenticity. Ibn Kathir,(۲) a most staunch supporter of the Sunni viewpoint, has devoted seven pages to this subject and has collected a great number .of different isnads from which the tradition is narrated

It is also Ibn Kathir who informs us that the famous historian at-Tabari, in a two-volume unfinished work entitled Kitab al-Fada'il (mentioned also by Yaqut in his Irshad, VI, p.۴۵۲), wrote in full details the Prophet's discourse in favour of 'Ali at Ghadir Khum. A modern scholar, Husayn 'Ali Mahfuz, in his penetrating researches on the subject of Ghadir Khum, has recorded with documentation that this tradition has been narrated by at least ۱۱۰ Companions, ۸۴ tabi'un, ۳۵۵ 'ulama', ۲۵ historians, ۲۷ traditionists, II exegesists, I۸ theologians, and ۵ philologists.(۳) Most of them were .later counted by the Sunnis as among their own number

Horovitz(۴) and Goldziher(۵), in their studies on the tradition of Ghadir Khum, state that the oldest evidence of this tradition is the verses of Kumayt (died ۱۲۶/۷۴۳-۴), which they consider undoubtedly genuine. The refusal of these two scholars to

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See Veccia Vaglieri, EI۲ Art. "Ghadir Khum", where there are mentioned exact - ۱ references to all of the above works except 'Iqd, IV, p.۳۱۱

Al-Bidaya wa 'l-Nihaya (Cairo, I۳۴۸-۵۱ AH), V, pp. ۲۰۸-I۴ -۲

Ta'rikh ash-Shi'a (Karbala, n.d.), p.۷۷. In modern times numerous voluminous works -۳ on Ghadir Khum have appeared, thus Amini's Al-Ghadir in ۳۸ volumes, and AI-Musawi's 'Abaqat al-Anwar, in ۳۴ volumes; all dealing with the rijal of the tradition.

"EI۱ article "Kumayt -۴

Cf. EI۲ article "Ghadir Khum", Bibliography -۵

accept any evidence before Kumayt is based on their sceptical assumption that the verses of the Prophet's poet, Hassan b. Thabit, composed on the spot, might not be genuine. However, the Shi'i sources, and also some of the Sunni authorities, claim that the oldest evidence is the verse of Hassan b. Thabit, which the poet, with the Prophet's approbation, instantly composed and recited(۱) when the people were .congratulating 'Ali on the occasion

Keeping in view the fact that Hassan was accompanying the Prophet at his historical

first pilgrimage after the migration, and the fact that the poet used to compose and recite verses on all noteworthy occasions of the Prophet's activities, it is highly improbable that this event should have passed unrecorded by Hassan, the official .poet-reporter of Muhammad

The event is, however, not recorded by some of those Sources. which are commonly used for the study of the life of the Prophet, such as Ibn Hashim, Tabari, and Ibn Sa'd. They either pass in silence over Muhammad's stop at Ghadir Khum, or, if they mention .it, say nothing of this tradition

Veccia Vaglieri explains the attitude of these few writers in that they "evidently feared to attract the hostility of the Sunnis, who were in power, by providing material for the polemic of the Shi'is, who used these words to support their thesis of 'Ali's right to the caliphate. Consequently, the western biographers of Muhammad, whose work is based on these sources, equally make no reference to what happened at

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Amini, Ghadir, II, p.۳۲; also see 'Amili, A'yan ash-Shi'a, III/i, pp. ۵۲۴-۳۲ -۱

.Ghadir Khum

It is, however, certain that Muhammad did speak in this place and utter the famous sentence, for the account of this event has been preserved, either in concise form or in detail, not only by Ya'qubi, whose sympathy for the 'Alid cause is well known, but also in the collections of traditions which are considered as canonical, especially in the Musnad of Ibn Hanbal; and the hadiths are so numerous and so well attested by the (different isnads that it does not seem possible to reject them."(۱

The bone of contention between the Sunnis and the Shi'is is not, however, and never has been, the authenticity of the event of Ghadir Khum, nor the declaration of the Prophet in favour of 'Ali, as quoted above; the real disagreement is in the meaning of

the word mawla used by the Prophet. The Shi'a unequivocally take the word in the meaning of leader, master, and patron, and therefore the explicitly nominated successor of the Prophet. The Sunnis, on the other hand, interpret the word mawla in the meaning of a friend, or the nearest kin and confidant.(۲)

No doubt the richness of meaning of many an Arabic word and the resulting ambiguity does render both the interpretations equally valid. The Sunnis, while accepting the tradition, assert that in that sentence the Prophet simply meant to exhort his followers to hold his cousin and the husband of his only surviving daughter in high esteem and affection.

Further, the Sunnis explain the circumstance which

۱- E۱۲ article "Ghadir Khum"

۲- Ibn Kathir, loc. cit.

necessitated the Prophet's exhortation in that some people were murmuring against 'Ali due to his harsh and indifferent treatment in the distribution of the spoils of the expedition of Al-Yaman, which had just taken place under 'Ali's leadership, and from where he, along with those who participated in the expedition, directly came to Mecca to join the Prophet at the Hajj.

To dispel these ill-feelings against his son-in-law, the Prophet spoke in this manner.(۱) Accepting this explanation as such, the fact still remains that this declaration of the Prophet in such an extraordinary manner, equating 'Ali in authority and person with himself, does provide a strong basis for the Shi'i claims.

Taking for granted the controversial character in interpretation of the Ghadir tradition, the events mentioned above could have been understood by some of the Prophet's Companions as indicative of his inclination towards 'Ali, though he did not or

could not nominate him explicitly, perhaps because of the old North Arabian custom of leaving the selection of a leader to the people. A commonly suggested obstacle in the way of 'Ali is said to have been his comparatively young age at the time of Muhammad's death.

However, our sources do not fail to point out that, though the "Senate" (Nadwa) of pre-Islamic Mecca was generally a council of elders only, the sons of the chieftain Qusayy were privileged to be exempted from this age restriction and were admitted to the council despite their youth. In later times more liberal concessions

p: ٣٣

١- ibid.

seem to have been in vogue; Abu Jahl was admitted despite his youth, and Hakim b. Hazm was admitted when he was only fifteen or twenty years old.(١) Ibn 'Abd Rabbih tells us, "There was no monarchic king over the Arabs of Mecca in the Jahiliya. So whenever there was a war, they took a ballot among chieftains and elected one as 'King', were he a minor or a grown man.

Thus on the day of Fijar, it was the turn of the Banu Hashim, and as a result of the ballot Al-'Abbas, who was then a mere child, was elected, and they seated him on the shield."(٢) At the time of Muhammad's death 'Ali was at least thirty-three years old, though in some other sources his age is given as thirty-six.

In conclusion, the idea that the question of the succession was primarily religious, rather than merely political, the popular notion of the hereditary sanctity of the Banu Hashim, coupled with the events which took place during the lifetime of the Prophet in favour of 'Ali; led to the crystallization of a point of view concerning the succession to the leadership of the community in which a number of Muhammad's Companions felt that 'Ali was the most suitable person to keep the covenant intact. In the heated debates of the Saqifa incident, right after the Prophet's death, these Companions did

not hesitate to voice their opinions. The resulting disagreement, to which we now turn, marks the beginning of what was

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Azraqi, Akhbar Makkah, I, p.۶۵; Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqaq, p.۹۷ -۱

Iqd, III, p.۳۱۵' -۲

.eventually to develop into a permanent division of the Umma into Sunni and Shi'i

Chapter ۲: Saqifa, The First Manifestations

In any attempt to determine the origins of Shi'i feelings in Islam, one must try to examine in detail the earliest incident in which such feelings manifest themselves. The history of a people in every branch, be it political, cultural, religious, or constitutional, is an unbroken continuity. No religious or political organization nor any particular viewpoint within a religious tradition can be properly understood without due .reference to its first tangible appearance

Historically the event of the Saqifa is inextricably connected with the emergence of the Shi'i viewpoint. The Saqifa, after which the event is named, was an old assembly hall in Medina where the people used to discuss and resolve their crucial problems. It was there that, as soon as the news of the Prophet's death came out, the people of .Medina gathered together to choose their leader

It was there that a group of Muhajirun forced on the Ansar their wish for the acceptance of Abu Bakr as the sole leader of the community. In this meeting at the Saqifa, some voices were raised in support of 'Ali's claims to the caliphate; thus ."Saqifa" should be taken as a generic name for the first split among the Muslims

To ignore it in tracing out Shi'i history and subsequent development in Islam would certainly lead to misunderstanding and wrong conclusions. It is thus an historical imperative to examine the proceedings of the Saqifa and attempt

to ascertain the points raised therein which ultimately found expression in the .establishment of the Shi'i discipline in Islam

A characteristic historiographical problem has to be seriously taken into consideration before any attempt can be made to outline the Saqifa incident. One may well question the authenticity of the reports in ascertaining the exact details of what occurred in the selection of the first successor of the Prophet. The controversial nature of the subject itself and the difficulty inherent in the source material make the .task of this investigation far from easy

This difficulty becomes still more serious when we note that the earliest extant report on the event was committed to systematic writing not before the first half of the second century of Islam, and during the reign of the first two 'Abbasid caliphs. This was the time when the division of the Muslim community into Shi'i and Sunni groupings had set deep into the hearts of Muslims, and both camps were accusing .each other of deviation from the true path of Islam

In these circumstances it seems quite possible that the different reports describing the proceedings of Abu Bakr's selection would have been circulated from different quarters according to their respective interests. One might, therefore, suspect the reports of the historians of Shi'I sympathies such as Ibn Ishaq, Ya'qubi, and Mas'udi as being biased in favour of the Shi'is; and similarly the writings of Ibn Sa'd, Baladhuri, .and even Tabari as reporting in Sunni colour

Nevertheless, a close scrutiny

of all early sources named above shows that the event of the Saqifa is reported, in its broad outline and essential points, in very similar ways, with of course some differences in details, in treatment of the material, and in emphasis on one report or the other. These differences are clearly indicative of the inclinations of the respective writers or their informants towards one side or the other, and can be discerned, though not without some difficulty. Similarly those reports of the very few writers who take extreme positions to support one particular view can also be easily distinguished .when compared with other accounts

For a study of this nature, it would be most appropriate to extract and examine the earliest known coherent tradition as a basis for comparison with accounts recorded by other writers. The earliest extant work which reports the Saqifa episode is that of Muhammad b. Ishaq b. Yasar (born ۸۵/۷۰۴, died ۱۵۱/۷۶۸), whose Sirat Rasul Allah was the first comprehensive biography of the Prophet. His report, though concise and brief, gives almost all the essential information of the event without dwelling on many of the details and different reports given by the writers who immediately followed .him

The shortness of Ibn Ishaq's account of the Saqifa is easily understandable in that his work deals mainly with the life and career of the Prophet. The event of the Saqifa in all its details is thus beyond the scope of his work; that the incident is mentioned at all

is probably due to the fact that it took place before the burial of the Prophet. This is evident from the arrangement of the closing chapters of his biography, which deal with: ۱: The illness of the Prophet, ۲: His death, ۳: The affair of the Saqifa of Bani Sa'ida, ۴: Funeral preparations and burial of the Prophet.

Ibn Ishaq first introduces the event in only a few lines and without citing his

authorities.(۱) It is Ibn Ishaq's usual technique to introduce first a collective tradition by combining different reports into a simple narrative which serves as an introduction to the detailed account which follows. In this he proves himself to be a loyal pupil of his master Az-Zuhri, who was the first to introduce collective traditions.(۲)Thus what appears to be simply an introductory paragraph in Ibn Ishaq's narrative of the Saqifa is given by others with different isnads (chain of transmitters) and with slightly varying words and lengths. After this brief introduction Ibn Ishaq relates the whole event in one single tradition of considerable length, which runs to about three and a half .pages(۳) and covers almost all the essential points of the event

This tradition deserves a few observations. Firstly, the whole story is related in the very words of the second caliph, 'Umar b. al-Khattab, from one of his Friday sermons in the mosque of Medina. 'Umar being a strict disciplinarian in observance of religious formalism, Friday prayers must have been attended by a great number of people

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.Ibn Hisham, IV, pp. ۳۰۶ f -۱

Abd al-'Aziz ad-Duri, “Al-Zuhri, A Study on the Beginnings of History Writing in' -۲ Islam”, BSOAS, XIX (۱۹۵۷), p.۸

Ibn Hisham, IV, pp ۳۰۷-۱۰ -۳

in Medina, and his exposition must have had such a wide circulation among both the Muhajirun and the Ansar that it could not be a later fabrication attributed to him. Secondly, this speech is reported almost unanimously by the majority of the historians who followed Ibn Ishaq, such as Tabari and even Baladhuri, who often wrote .selectively to support the Sunni viewpoint of his day

Thirdly, it is beyond any doubt true that 'Umar b. al-Khattab himself played the most important role at that crucial moment, took the initiative in the fateful event of the Saqifa, and indeed was the moving spirit in the selection of Abu Bakr. A unanimously .accepted report in his own. words is therefore of the greatest historical importance

Fourthly, Ibn Ishaq begins the tradition by prefixing the words “in connection with

these events (Saqifa) 'Abd Allah b. Abi Bakr told me..." This indicates that, besides 'Umar's account, Ibn Ishaq was aware of other reports and detailed accounts, but for the sake of brevity picked out the one which he considered the most reliable and at .the same time comprehensive enough to cover the entire event

The isnad of this tradition in Ibn Ishaq is direct, short, based solely on Medinese informants, and prefixed with the verb of certainty and personal contact, haddathani, "he told me". The isnad reads: "'Abd Allah b. Abu Bakr told me from (١) Ibn Shihab Az-Zuhri (٢) from 'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Utba b. Mas'ud (٣) from 'Abd Allah b.

".al-'Abbas

Both 'Abd Allah b. Abi Bakr(٤) (born ca. ٦٠/٦٧٩-٨٠, died ca. ١٣٠/٧٤٧-٨) and Zuhri(١) (born ca. ٥١/١٦٧١, died ١٢٤/٧٤٢) belonged to the third generation (Tab'i Tabi'un) after the Prophet, and to the second generation of traditionists. Both were pioneers of Muslim historiography, and both received their material from the Tabi'un, who in turn were either eye-witnesses to the events while in their early youth or had received the .information from the Companions of the Prophet

With the recent researches in Islamic historiography by Nabia Abbott(٢) and others, it is now established beyond any doubt that the life, wars, and career of the Prophet, collectively known as Sira, along with subsequent events, became an object of .historical research beginning with the generation that followed Muhammad

In this connection there appear names such as Aban(٣) (born ca. ٢٠/٦٤١, died ca. ١٠٠/٧١٨-١٩), the son of the Caliph 'Uthman; 'Urwa b. az-Zubayr b. al-'Awwam(٤) (born .٢٣/٦٤٤, died ٩٤/٧١٢-١٣); Wahb b. Munabbih(٥) (born ٣٤/٦٥٤-٥, died ١١٠/٧٢٨-٩); and others

This interest in historical research gathered great momentum by the third generation and reached its climax in the Sira or Maghazi works of two of Ibn Ishaq's most prominent teachers, Zuhri and 'Abd Allah b. Abi Bakr. It is reasonable to assume that

these two pioneers of historical writing in Islam must have interested themselves in the event of the Saqifa, which was certainly the most important event that took place .at the time of the death of the founder of Islam

It is equally reasonable

۱- Wafayat, IV, pp.۱۷۷ f.; Tahdhib, IX, p.۴۴۵

۲- Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri (Chicago, ۱۹۵۷-۷۲), I, pp. ۵-۳۱; II, pp. ۵-۶۴

۳- Tahdhib, I, p.۹۷

۴- Wafayat, III, pp.۲۵۵ ff.

۵- ibid., VI, pp. ۳۵ f.

to assume that Ibn Ishaq preferred to narrate the event as it was handed down to him from his two most intimate and respected teachers rather than to quote from other sources, especially when his interest in the Saqifa was limited to the events related to the death of the Prophet. It is also important to note that these two authorities, especially Zuhri, appear in almost all the later works which describe the .Saqifa incident

Baladhuri and Tabari, whose interest in the event is not confined to the events connected with the death of the Prophet, quote these two sources in their accounts of what they consider to be one of the most important historical events in Islamic .history

In Ibn Ishaq's narrative, Zuhri's authority is 'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Utba b. Mas'ud,(۱) one of Zuhri's four most trusted and esteemed teachers. These four were Sa'id b. al-Musayyib(۲) (died ۹۴/۷۱۲-۱۳), under whom Zuhri sat for ten years as a faithful student, 'Urwa b. az-Zubayr, Aban b. 'Uthman, and 'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abd Allah. All four are among the most distinguished and recognized authorities on Fiqh, Sira, and Maghazi. Zuhri is frequently quoted as expressing his highest regard for them, and

(described them as the "four seas of knowledge" and "the four seas of the Quraysh".(۳)

Three of them, with the exception of Aban, are also among the famous illustrious seven lawyers of Medina. All these four have been credited with leaving written works for the following generations in addition to

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۱- Tahdhib, VII, p. ۳۸۲; Aghani IX, pp. ۱۳۵ ff.

۲- Ibn Sa'd, II, pp.۳۷۹ ff.

۳- Ibn Sa'd, II, p. ۳۸۲; Aghani; IX, p.۱۳۷

what they had transmitted orally to their pupils.

Our interest in these four celebrated scholars of Islamic history is due not only to the fact that one of them appears in Ibn Ishaq's isnad, but also to the fact that their names frequently appear in many of the isnads of the Saqifa event recorded by other writers.

A word must be said concerning 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas(۱) (born three years before the Hijra, died ۶۸/۶۸۷-۸), who appears as the last authority in Ibn Ishaq and in many other Saqifa accounts written by the historians and traditionists who followed Ibn Ishaq. It will suffice to say that he has always been respected as one of the most trustworthy authorities in all periods and among all schools of thought in Islam, not only in Qur'anic exegesis but in other branches of learning cultivated at Medina.

Re was in fact one of the distinguished founders of the Medinese school of learning and scholarship, which devoted itself mainly to religious sciences. Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi, An-Nasa'i, Ibn Maja, followed by many others, unanimously accepted his traditions. In the scholarly research for which he was well known, he gathered information concerning the life of the Prophet by questioning senior companions.(۲)

Not only did he witness the event of the Saqifa as a young man, but he also must have carefully preserved the information received from his father Al-'Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet, who was undoubtedly involved in the controversy which engulfed Medina immediately after

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.Ibn Sa'd, II, pp.۳۶۵ ff -۱

See W. Montgomery Watt, "'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas", EI۲ -۲

the death of the Prophet. It is not surprising therefore that 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas .appears in almost all the sources describing the Saqifa

The second author of note who deals with the Saqifa is Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. Sa'd (born ca. ۱۶۸/۷۸۴-۵), who wrote the first systematic and comprehensive biographical work, Kitab at-Tabaqat al-Kabir (The Book of Classes), dealing with important personalities from the Prophet down to the time of his own death in ۲۳۰/۸۴۴-۵.

In arranging his material he deals in detail with the lives and careers of the first generation of Muslims, especially the Companions and close associates of the Prophet. One would have expected that Ibn Sa'd, while writing a long forty-one page(۱) biography of Abu Bakr, would have discussed the event of Saqifa in much .greater detail than his predecessor Ibn Ishaq

As it was perhaps one of the most important and most crucial events in the entire career of Abu Bakr, it is surprising that Ibn Sa'd does not seem to be interested in the proceedings as such. He clearly attempts to hush up all those reports which might reflect on the controversial character of the selection of Abu Bakr, and carefully selects only those traditions which exalt Abu Bakr's undisputed excellence and .qualifications for the leadership of the community at the death of the Prophet

He makes every effort to praise and glorify the first caliph's virtues, his services to Islam, and the qualities which befitted him for immediate succession to Muhammad. Indeed

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Ibn Sa'd, III, pp. ۱۶۹-۲۱۳ -۱

he uses the same technique in writing 'Ali's biography to show that he was the best candidate for the office in his time. In this he proves himself the true representative of the Sunni tradition in Islam of the early third century and of the piety of the Medinese school, both of which were built on the Murji'a doctrine.

This doctrine, in its more refined and developed form in the third century, required a Muslim to refrain from any discussion which might tarnish the respect and honour with which the early personalities of Islam, especially the Companions, were regarded. Anyone reading Ibn Sa'd's' biography of Abu Bakr will immediately notice that the writer is interested in presenting only the best qualities and virtues of his subject. A brief summary of Ibn Sa'd's arrangement of the material will help in understanding how he wishes his reader to look at Saqifa.

Ibn Sa'd begins by writing two pages on the clan, family name, and title of Abu Bakr.(۱) Even in this biographical data his main emphasis is on his title of As-Siddiq, the truthful. He inserts a tradition to the effect that after Muhammad's ascent to heaven (Mi'raj), which he feared people would not accept, the angel Gabriel assured him that Abu Bakr would do so since he was a Siddiq.

The second section, entitled "Abu Bakr's Conversion to Islam",(۲) contains five traditions all to the effect that Abu Bakr was the first among men to believe in Muhammad's Prophethood and completely ignores

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ibid., pp. ۱۶۹-۷۱ -۱

ibid., pp.۱۷۱-۲ -۲

many traditions which describe 'Ali as the first man to become Muslim.(۱) This is followed by the third section, with the heading, “Description of the Cave and the Migration to Medina”,(۲) in which Ibn Sa'd records twenty-six traditions.

These traditions emphasize Abu Bakr's close friendship with Muhammad, that he was “only one of the two” when Muhammad took refuge in the cave on his way to Medina, and that his services were invaluable at that critical moment.

Then, after a few traditions about Abu Bakr's abode at Medina, he immediately records Abu Bakr's brotherhood in faith with 'Umar b. al-Khattab and the Prophet's declaration that Abu Bakr and 'Umar were the leaders or Lords of the adults of Paradise of all times, with the exception of the Prophets and the apostles.

This is followed by the traditions which describe Muhammad's special favour to Abu Bakr when he ordered the latter's house to be built adjoining the mosque in Medina while others were denied this honour, that Abu Bakr defended Muhammad in all the battles, and that the Prophet appointed him as his standard-bearer at Tabuk. The last five traditions in this section describe Muhammad's statements that if he was to choose a friend (Khalil) for himself he could name no one other than Abu Bakr, that “No one is more beloved to me in my entire community than Abu Bakr,” and that “The most zealous and vigilant after me in my community is Abu Bakr.”

The fourth section, entitled “Description of the

See Ch. ۱, footnote ۵۱ -۱

Ibn Sa'd, III, pp. ۱۷۲-۸ -۲

Prayer which the Prophet Ordered Abu Bakr [to lead] before his Death”,(۱) is perhaps

.the most indicative of Ibn Sa'd's attitude

Here he gives ten traditions, the first five of which describe the Prophet's insistence .that only Abu Bakr must lead the prayer while Muhammad was sick

The following three traditions describe Muhammad's request for writing material to write down his will and command to the effect that Abu Bakr should succeed him, so that people should not doubt or disagree on this question. When 'Abd ar-Rahman, the son of Abu Bakr, went out to bring the writing material, people said, "Sit down. Who "?could dispute over Abu Bakr

In the ninth tradition, 'A'isha the widow of the Prophet is reported to have replied when she was asked: "O mother of the faithful, who did the Prophet appoint to succeed him?" "Abu Bakr," she replied. "Who after Abu Bakr?' she was asked. "'Umar," she answered. "Who after 'Umar?" again she was asked. "Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah," .she answered, on which the enquirer kept silent

The section closes on the tenth tradition, coming back to the topic given to the heading, saying, "The Prophet was sick for thirteen days; whenever he felt better he ".led the prayer, but whenever his condition was not so well Abu Bakr led the prayer

It is interesting to note here that except for two rather unimportant reports, all of these traditions are reported from 'A'isha, the daughter of Abu Bakr, whose rivalry with and dislike for both

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ibid., pp.۱۷۸-۸۱ -۱

.Ali and Fatima are well known'

Anyone who reads this section of Ibn Sa'd will immediately feel that the author has a specific task set before him. The entire section is carefully planned to show that Abu

Bakr, by the special favours and indications shown by the Prophet, was beyond any doubt the only deserving candidate to succeed the dying Prophet. The author becomes so impatient that he even abandons the main theme of the section, and in the second tradition, which would have otherwise been under the event of the Saqifa, describes 'Umar's argument against the Ansar in favour of Abu Bakr, based on the .latter's being the leader of the prayer

The tradition reads: "When the Prophet died, and the Ansar suggested [in the assembly of the Saqifa), 'Let us have a leader from among ourselves and a leader from among yourselves (Muhajirun),' 'Umar said, 'Did not you know, O people of Ansar, that the Prophet appointed Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer?' The Ansar said 'Yes.' 'Then would you like to prefer yourselves to Abu Bakr?' 'We take refuge in (God, to prefer ourselves over Abu Bakr,' said the Ansar.(۱)

Immediately after this section, Ibn Sa'd comes to the event of the Saqifa. Unlike other writers before and after him, he does not name this section "Affair (amr) of the Saqifa", but gives the heading, "Description of the Homage [paid] to Abu Bakr" (Dhikr .(bay 'at Abi Bakr

One cannot fail to see that in the four

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ibid., p.۱۷۹ -۱

preceding chapters Ibn Sa'd has carefully prepared a psychological background for his reader to accept his account of the undisputed selection of Abu Bakr on the basis .of his merits and qualities so far enumerated

On the Saqifa he records a total of fifteen traditions(۱) of which only six directly or indirectly are related to the Saqifa. The first tradition reports that when the Prophet died 'Umar came to Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah and said, "Open your hand and I will pay

homage to you (Li ubaya'uka) because the Prophet declared you trustworthy of this ".community

Abu 'Ubayda replied, "O 'Umar, I never found you so misled since you accepted Islam. Would you do me fealty while there is among you As-Siddiq only second of the two [in .the cave]?" The second tradition is almost identical

The third tradition is a peculiar example of Ibn Sa'd's treatment of the subject. In this report he extracted a small sentence from the lengthy three-page tradition reported by Ibn Ishaq and others in the form of 'Umar's speech in the mosque of Medina. Ibn Sa'd's fragment reads: "Ibn 'Abbas said, 'I heard 'Umar saying, while describing Abu Bakr's bay'a, "There is none among you to whom people would devote themselves as " ' ".they did to Abu Bakr

In the fourth tradition Ibn Sa'd can no longer completely ignore the controversy which arose on the question, but even this is presented as an argument in favour of Abu Bakr. It reads: "When people held

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ibid., pp. ۱۸۱-۵ -۱

back from Abu Bakr, he said, 'Who could be more deserving for this thing (amr) than I? Was I not the first to pray with the Prophet?' Then he mentioned those good deeds [lit. ".attributes] which he performed with the Prophet

The fifth tradition is, in fact, the only one which, on the authority of Abu Bakr's grandson, Qasim b. Muhammad b. Abi Bakr,(۱) refers to the debate of the Saqifa. It is hurriedly hushed up in only seven lines; the rest of the tradition deals with the distribution of some goods by Abu Bakr. The rest of the ten traditions have hardly anything to do with the Saqifa event as such, and are mainly devoted to Abu Bakr's .excellence, frugality, simplicity, devotion, and piety

There is hardly any need for further comments on Ibn Sa'd's treatment of the Saqifa. It should suffice here to note that an historical investigation into the controversial nature of the subject was outside the scope of his work. Nevertheless, his importance .as an early writer cannot be overemphasized

He is one of the foremost authorities of his time and represents a school of biographer-traditionists of great importance; in any study of the Saqifa he cannot be ignored. Ibn Sa'd becomes much more important when we notice his adherence to the “pious” traditional technique and the adoption of many a tradition given by him in .this subject by those who followed him

He represents a school which came to dominate the development of the Sunni point of view

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.Ibn Sa'd, V, p.۱۸۷; Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib, VIII, p.۳۳۳; Wafayat, IV, pp.۵۹ f -۱

in Islam. His presentation of the Saqifa leads his reader to believe that Abu Bakr's selection went smoothly, without any noticeable opposition or controversy, and that it was readily and instantly accepted by everyone, including 'Ali who himself admitted .the former's superior claims and merits

We now must turn to Ibn Sa'd's younger contemporary Ahmad b. Yahya b. Jabir al-Baladhuri(۱) (died ۲۷۹/۸۹۲-۳), whose voluminous Ansab al-Ashraf is perhaps the most .important historico-biographical work of the third century

On the one hand, he follows Ibn Sa'd in technique and incorporates much of his material; on the other, he goes much deeper and collects every possible report and version of the Saqifa event from divergent sources and different schools. While Ibn Sa'd depends mainly on Medinese informants, Baladhuri finds them unsatisfactory; he goes further and frequently quotes Mada'ini; who takes up a kind of middle position

between Kufan and Medinese traditionists. He also narrates from Ibn al-Kalbi, Abu Ma'shar, 'Awana, and, in at least two cases, even from the Shi'i Abu Mikhnaf.(۲)

He thereby demonstrates not only his keen historical interest in investigating the event of the Saqifa but also its great importance in the annals of early Islam. The pietistic attitude which was a dominant characteristic of the Medinese schools, especially when dealing with the differences among the prominent companions, was not so prominent with the more historically-minded authors of the Kufan and Basran schools. Baladhuri's preservation of the latter tradition is this of considerable importance for the present discussion.

In Baladhuri's scheme, the

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۱ - For the life and work of Baladhuri, see Goitein's introduction to Volume V of the Ansab, pp. ۹-۳۲

۲ - On these early writers, see, respectively, Ibn Nadim, Fihrist, pp.۱۰۰ if., ۹۵, ۲۷۷, ۹۱, ۹۳

Saqifa is treated in a manner similar to that of Ibn Ishaq, with the events connected with the death of the Prophet. In the chapter entitled "Affair of the Saqifa", Baladhuri records a total of thirty-three traditions,(۱) seven of which are exactly identical to material in Ibn Sa'd.

In this Baladhuri shows his great respect for his elder contemporary, whom he always quotes with the direct verb, haddathani (he told me), indicating that he took Ibn Sa'd's material not from the Tabaqat but by direct dictation from Ibn Sa'd himself.(۲)

The rest of the twenty-six traditions deal with the controversy over the question of succession, the heated debates which took place in the Saqifa, rival claims of the Ansar and the Muhajirun, 'Ali's protest over the selection, the opposition of Banu Hashim and some of the Ansar to Abu Bakr, and Abu Bakr's own statement that

though he was not the best candidate, he accepted the caliphate to save the .community from dissension

Eleven of these twenty-six traditions are taken from Mada'ini, who frequently quotes Zuhri, whose own isnads often go back to the sources of the "four seas of the (Quraysh" discussed above.(٣

The most revealing point here is that four of these twenty-six traditions (١: a complete description of the controversial debate in the Saqifa; ٢: Abu Sufyan's offer of help to 'Ali; ٣: Abu Bakr's statement that though he was not the best candidate, he accepted the caliphate only to avoid dissension; and ۴: a small part

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١- Ansab al-Ashraf ed. Muhammad Hamidullah (Cairo, ١٩۶٠), I, pp. ۵٧٩-٩١

٢- Goitein, op. cit., p. ١٨

٣- See footnote ١٢

of 'Umar's speech that even if Abu Bakr's selection was a hasty affair, it did save the community from evil) are narrated by Baladhuri from Ibn Sa'd with the verb "he told me". Ibn Sa'd knew these traditions and found them important enough to transmit .them orally to Baladhuri but he himself shrank from including them in his Tabaqat

The long speech of 'Umar which describes the Saqifa in full and comprises the comprehensive account in Ibn Ishaq, as we have seen above, is reported by Baladhuri three times; first (No.١١٧٣) from Ibn Sa'd, where only a small sentence justifying Abu Bakr's merits (as in Tabaqat) is reported; a second time (No. ١١٧۶) when only the first .part of it is given; then finally the full text (No. ١١٨١), as in Ibn Ishaq, is recorded

In all three places the final three authorities are the same as in the Sira: Zuhri, 'Ubayd Allah, and Ibn 'Abbas, though the first authorities change in all three instances. In No.١١٧٣ Zuhri's narrator is salih b. Kaysan;(١) in No.١١٧۶ it is Mu'ammar b. Rashid(٢) and (in No.١١٨١, the full text is taken by Baladhuri from Mada'ini through Ibn Ju'daba.(٣

There are a few differences between the text of Mada'ini quoted by Baladhuri and that of 'Abd Allah b. Abi Bakr quoted by Ibn Ishaq. To conclude it will suffice to say that although Baladhuri displays a tendency in favour of Abu Bakr's excellence for the office, as is evident from the order of preference in

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Dhahabi, Mizan, II, p.۲۹۹ -۱

ibid., IV, p.۱۵۴ -۲

ibid., p. ۴۳۶ -۳

the arrangement of the material, he does not suppress many traditions which show the inclination of some of the important companions towards 'Ali.

The picture of the Saqifa still remains rather incomplete until one takes into consideration Baladhuri's younger contemporary Ibn Wadih al-Ya'qubi (died ۲۸۴/۸۹۷). Anyone reading Ya'qubi's rendering of the Saqifa immediately after Ibn Sa'd and Baladhuri will notice a sharp contrast both in substance and in emphasis.

Whereas Ibn Sa'd would have us believe that Abu Bakr faced hardly any opposition from those who favoured 'Ali, Ya'qubi would impress upon his reader that there was rather serious opposition to Abu Bakr from a group which supported 'Ali's rights to the caliphate. Unlike Ibn Sa'd and Baladhuri, Ya'qubi does not give separate traditions prefixed by isnad, nor does he follow his sources verbally except in quotations and direct speeches.

This is his method throughout his history, the Saqifa being no exception. Opening with the heading, “Information (khabar) of the Saqifa of Banu Sa'ida and the Fealty to Abu Bakr”, he writes a cohesive, uninterrupted four-page narrative from all the sources available to him.(۱) It of course paraphrases many traditions into one continuous account, but all the quotations and speeches are faithfully preserved without any transformation. This is evident from comparisons with other sources before and after

.him

As regards his sources, we know that, as a general rule and perhaps for the sake of a literary cohesive text, he rarely cites his authorities. Nevertheless, it is usually not difficult to ascertain

p: ۵۳

Ta'rikh (Beirut, ۱۹۶۰), II, pp. I۲۳-۶ -۱

their identity.(۱) In the case of the Saqifa, some of his sources, such as Mada'ini and Abu Mikhnaf, are the same as those used by Tabari. Here we must point out that it is beyond any doubt an historical fact that the event of the Saqifa became an object of .keen historical interest right from the very beginnings of historical writing in Islam

This is evident from Ibn Nadim's and Tusi's Fihrists, Najashi's Rijal and other bibliographical works which list numerous treatises on the Saqifa under the names of .a great many writers beginning from the early second century onward

For example, both Abu Mikhnaf(۲) and Mada'ini(۳) are reported to have written independent treatises on the subject, and when we read the Saqifa account in Tabari, .Baladhuri, and others, we find a number of traditions on their authority

Ibn Abi 'l-Hadid (died ca. ۶۵۶/۱۲۵۸) in his voluminous Sharh Nahj al-Balagha, a mine of valuable historical material composed with the help of a rich library of rare manuscripts in his possession, writes forty pages on the Saqifa(۴) that incorporate .some of these rare treatises which survived until his time

Among these is a text by Abu Bakr Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Aziz al-Jawhari(۵) (died ۲۹۸/۹۱۰-۱۱), who cites many early authorities in his treatise on the Saqifa. A modern scholar of note, Agha Buzurg at-Tehrani, records in his exhaustive work on Shi'i literature a great number of treatises written down on the Saqifa in the early centuries of Islam.(۶) Many of them considerably

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۱- E. L. Petersen, 'Ali And Mu'awiya In Early Arabic Tradition (Copenhagen ۱۹۶۴), pp.۱۶۹ ff.

۲- Najashi, Rijal, p.۲۴۵

۳- Ibn Nadim, Fihrist, p.۱۰۱

۴- Sharh Nahj al-Balagha, ed. Muhammad Abu'l-Fadl Ibrahim, ۲nd ed. (Beirut, ۱۹۶۵), II, pp. ۲۱-۶o

۵- ibid., pp. ۴۴-۶o. For Al-Jawhari see Adh-Dhari'a, XII, p.۲۰۶

۶- Adh-Dhari'a ila Tasanif ash-Shi'a, ۲۴ volumes, Najaf, passim

pre-date Ya'qubi; a few of them even originate from the circle of traditionists who gathered around the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (died ۱۴۸/۷۶۵-۶).

By the time Ibn Sa'd, Baladhuri, and other Sunni writers set out to write, Sunni Islam had already defined and fixed its attitudes and loyalties based on the Murji'i principles of synthesis and tolerance. It was, therefore, natural for these writers to suppress or ignore any report that might clash with the accepted norms of the day. Most of that material which could support the Shi'i position in favour of 'Ali was thus either suppressed or conveniently suspected of being fabricated. This was exactly what happened to Ya'qubi.

There is a common tendency to suspect his accounts, which could support the Shi'i cause, mainly because he himself was a Shi'i, but quite logically, if Ya'qubi can be suspected of bias in favour of the Shi'i position, why cannot other historians of the opposite affiliation be equally suspected of suppressing those reports which serve the Shi'i purpose?

In this situation, we feel that Ya'qubi's history should be considered a valuable compendium of historical documents which survived the tendentious efforts of the historians of the majority party. The argument for the overall authenticity of his material is enhanced by the fact that most of his Saqifa material is also reported in

.fragmentary fashion by his non-Shi'i successors

We may thus conclude that certain data handed down to us by Ya'qubi, but omitted by his three predecessors, are of immense historical importance for the

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reconstruction of the Saqifa event. These four writers cover every point of view and leave little to be added by the encyclopaedic annalist Muhammad b. Jarir at-Tabari (died ۳۱۱/۹۲۳۴). He generally displays a remarkably unbiased and uncommitted attitude .in his history, undoubtedly the most comprehensive that has survived to us

He does not base his selection of sources on religious affiliations, but uses them according to his own historical judgement in relation to each event. He builds his narrative by recording several parallel and co-ordinated traditions or, wherever .necessary, by giving divergent reports coming to him from different sources

In the latter case he gives his own historical opinion either by explaining how each event is to be placed and interpreted or by arranging his material in order of preference. This second method he uses when reporting on the Saqifa. He completely ignores Ibn Sa'd's account of the event, incorporates most of the material of Ibn Ishaq, Ya'qubi, and Baladhuri through his own sources, and makes some additions of .his own

He reports 'U mar's speech on the Saqifa in full, exactly as did Ibn Ishaq, but the former's authority is 'Abbad b. 'Abbad(۱) (Al-Muhallabi) from 'Abbad b. Rashid,(۴۰) while the last three authorities are the same as in Ibn Ishaq. He is also the one who, alone among all the historians of Islam, preserves Abu Mikhnaf's treatise on the Saqifa.(۲) On the whole, Tabari's history presents a balanced and unbiased account of the Saqifa. He makes it absolutely clear that

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1- Dhahabi; Mizan, II, p.367

2- ibid., p.365

there(1) was a strong body of support for 'Ali, but on the other hand, emphasizes that Abu Bakr was duly elected by the majority of the people.

There is little need to examine in detail the works of those writers who followed these five early sources. Subsequent authors, such as Mas'udi(2) (died 344/955-6), Ibn Athir(3) (died 630/1232-3), Ibn 'Abd Rabbih(4) (died 327/938-9), and even Suyuti (died 911/1505-6) in his specialized work on the subject of the caliphate,(5) add hardly anything substantially important to our knowledge on the event. Later Shi'i works by authors such as at-Tabrasi(6) and al-Majlisi(7) are mainly polemic in nature and give a very tendentious pro-Shi'I account of no historical value.

In an attempt to reconstruct the events at the Saqifa, the best approach is to take, as a basis, Ibn Ishaq, who is not only the earliest authority, but also the one whose work has reached us in the recension of Ibn Hisham (died 218/833), himself a die-hard Sunni and earlier than the other four writers mentioned above. Moreover, Ibn Hisham never hesitates in his task of editing Ibn Ishaq's Sira to correct or comment on any point with which he disagrees, and he often inserts some additional information he thinks was overlooked or omitted by the author.(8)

Ibn Hisham makes none of these comments, additions, or corrections in the account of the Saqifa, however. The tradition of the Saqifa in the Sira is thus an account recorded by a writer of Shii leaning,(9) approved by an editor-critic

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1- Tabari, I, pp.1837-45

2- Muruj adh-Dhahab, ed. Daghir (Beirut 1965), II, p.301, and at-Tanbih wa'l-Ishraf

(Beirut ۱۹۶۵), p. ۲۸۴, in both of which he mentions Saqifa only in passing, referring his reader to his exclusive work on the subject, which unfortunately is lost.

۳- Al-Kamil fi't-Ta'rikh, II, pp.۲۲۱ ff in which his account of Saqifa is almost the same as that of Tabari

۴- A۱-'Iqd al-Farid, IV, pp.۲۵۷ ff.

۵- Ta'rikh al-Khulafa', ed. 'Abd al-Hamid, (Cairo, ۱۹۶۴), pp.۶۱-۷۲

۶- Al-Ihtijaj, ed. Muhammad Baqir al-Khursan (Najaf ۱۹۶۶), I, pp. ۸۹-۱۱۸

۷- Bihar al-Anwar

۸- A. Guillaume, translating the Sira, collected all the assertions and comments of Ibn Hisham and arranged them separately at the end of the book under the heading, "Ibn Hisham's Notes". There are ۹۲۲ notes of various length, some of them are as long as a page or more. See A. Guillaume, The Life of Muhammad (Oxford, ۱۹۵۵), pp. ۶۹۰-۷۹۸

۹ - This is a common accusation levelled against Ibn Ishaq. See, however, Nabia Abbott's comments on this subject in Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri (Chicago, ۱۹۵۷-۷۲), I, p. ۹۷. The remarkable lack of any partiality in a fragment of the Ta'rikh al-Khulafa' leads Abbott to question the accuracy of such accusations.

of Sunni belief, and also reported by the majority of the writers following Ibn Ishaq through different authorities, as we have seen above. For other necessary details not presented by Ibn Ishaq, we must draw from our other four authorities.

It is our intention here to base our reconstruction of the Saqifa on a translation of 'Umar's speech as recorded by Ibn Ishaq.(۱) Since a speech of this sort naturally is not supposed to cover every detail, frequent breaks will be utilized to draw in other sources and attempt to form a complete picture of the proceedings. Sources of the additions filling the gaps will be given within the narrative so that the reader will be able to notice them immediately.

Before narrating 'Umar's speech, Ibn Ishaq opens with anintroduction, without isn۴d, which can be found in Baladhri (I, p. ۵۸۳) on the authority of Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Ayyub(۲) from Ibrahim b. Sa'd(۳) from Ibn Ishaq from Zuhri. It reads as follows:

When the Apostle died, this clan of the Ansar gathered round Sa'd b. 'Ubada in the" hall of Banu Sa'ida; and 'Ali and az-Zubayr b. al-'Awwam and Talha 'Ubayd Allah separated themselves in Fatima's house while the rest of the Muhajirun gathered round Abu Bakr accompanied by Usayd b. Hudayr with the Banu 'Abdu'l-Ashhal. Then someone came to Abu Bakr and 'Umar telling them that this clan of the Ansar had gathered round Sa'd in the hall (Saqifa) of Banu Sa'ida: 'If you want to have command ,of the people

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۱ - For the translation of Ibn Ishaq's account, I have largely drawn on Guillaume's .translation of the Sira

۲- Dhahabi; Mizan, I, p.۱۳۳

۳- ibid., p.۳۳

.then take it before their action becomes serious

Now [the dead body of] the Apostle was still in his house, the burial arrangements not having been completed, and his family had locked the door of the house. 'Umar said, 'I said to Abu Bakr "Let us go to these our brothers of the Ansar to see what they are (doing."(۱

After this Ibn Ishaq records 'Umar's famous speech, for which the chain of transmitters has been examined in each of our sources above. Passing over those parts which do not deal with the Saqifa, it reads: "In connection with these events [selection of Abu Bakr] 'Abd Allah b. Abu Bakr told me from Ibn Shihab Az-Zuhri from 'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Utba b. Mas'ud from 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas who said, 'I was waiting for 'Abd ar-Rahman b. 'Awf in his station in Mini while he was with 'Umar in the .last pilgrimage which 'Umar performed

When he ['Abd ar-Rahman] returned he found me ['Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas] waiting, for I was teaching him to read the Qur'an. 'Abd ar-Rahman said to me: "I wish you could have seen a man who came to the Commander of the Faithful ['Umar] and said, 'O Commander of the Faithful, would you like a man who said, "By God, if 'Umar were dead I would do fealty to so-and-so."? Fealty given to Abu Bakr was an unpre-
" ' ".meditated affair (falta) and was ratified

Here we must point out that this speech, though

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.Ibn Hisham, IV, pp.۳۰۶ f -۱

recorded by the vast majority of writers, includes neither the name of the person who talked to 'Umar nor the name of the one to whom he wished to pay fealty, except in .Baladhuri, I, pp. ۵۸۱, ۵۸۲

In tradition No.۱۱۷۶ Baladhuri quotes 'Umar as saying that the person speaking to 'Umar was Zubayr, and that the person Zubayr wanted to hail as caliph was 'Ali. In tradition No. ۱۱۸۱, Baladhuri gives only one name: "'Umar delivered a sermon in which " .he said that 'so-and-so says if 'Umar dies we Will pay our homage (baya'na) to 'Ali

Baladhuri's report can be confirmed by later writers such as Ibn Abi '۱-Hadid, who' gives the name of 'Ali on the authority of al-Jahiz(۱) It is, however, of great importance to note that it was 'Ali's name which caused 'Umar to deliver such an .important and fiery speech

Umar was angry [when he heard this) and said, 'God willing, I shall get up among the'" men tonight and warn them against those who desire to usurp power over them. 'I ('Abd ar-Rahman) said, 'Do not do it, Commander of the Faithful, for the festival brings together the riff-raff and the lowest of the people; they are the ones who will be in

.the majority in your proximity [assembly] when you stand among the people

I fear lest you should stand and say something which they will repeat everywhere, not understanding what you say or interpreting it correctly; so wait until you come to ,Medina

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Hadid, Sharh, II, p.۲۵ -۱

for it is the home of the Sunna and you can confer privately with the jurists (fuqaha') and the nobles of the people. You can say what you like and the jurists will understand what you say and interpret it properly.' 'Umar replied, 'By God, if He wills, I will do so '...as soon as I reach Medina

We came to Medina at the end of Dhu'l-Hijja and on the Friday I (Ibn 'Abbas)" returned [to the mosque] quickly when the sun had set ... 'Umar sat on the pulpit, and when the muezzins were silent he praised God, as was fitting, and said: 'Today I am about to say to you something which God has willed that I should say and I do not know whether perhaps it is my last utterance. He who understands and heeds it let him take it with him wherever he goes; and as for him who fears that he will not '.understand it, he may not deny that I said it

I have heard that someone [Zubayr as in Baladhuri said, 'If 'Umar were dead I ... " would do fealty to so-and-so ['Ali].' Do not let a man deceive himself by saying that acceptance of Abu Bakr was a hasty mistake (falta) which was ratified. Admittedly it was that, but God averted the evil of it. There is none among you to whom people would devote themselves as they did to Abu Bakr. He who accepts a man as ruler without consulting the Muslims, uch

acceptance has no validity for either of them: and they are subject to death [.[punishment

What happened was that when God took away His Prophet [from among us], the“ Ansar opposed us and gathered with their leaders in the Saqifa [hall] of Banu Sa'ida, and 'Ali and az-Zubayr and their companions [and those who were their supporters] ”.withdrew from us, while the Muhajirun gathered to Abu Bakr

From 'Umar's own statement, it is clear that there was serious opposition to Abu Bakr's candidacy not only from the Ansar, but also from 'Ali and his supporters. Thus, no sooner had the news of Muhammad's death come out than the Ansar of Medina, undoubtedly fearful of Meccan domination and perhaps aware of their designs, hastily assembled in the Saqifa Banu Sa'ida to elect a leader from among themselves. 'Umar b. al-Khattab, upon hearing people saying that Muhammad was dead, stood and furiously remonstrated that the Prophet could not die. Claiming that Muhammad had simply disappeared for a time, he threatened he would kill anyone who claimed that Muhammad was dead.(۱) Abu Bakr, who had been at his house in Sunh, a suburb of Medina, then arrived on the scene. Hearing 'Umar's altercations, he went straight into the Prophet's house. Discovering that Muhammad had passed away, Abu Bakr .came back and confirmed his death to the people gathered around 'Umar

At this point we have three different versions. The first reports that when Abu Bakr was addressing the people, an informant came and told him and

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Later he explained to Ibn 'Abbas that he wrongly understood the Qur'anic verse (۱۱, -۱ ۱۴۳) which says, “Thus we have made you a middle people that you may be a witness

against men, and that the Apostle may be a witness against you." Ibn Hisham, IV, .pp.۳۱۱ f

Umar about the Ansar's meeting in the Saqifa. Both Abu Bakr and 'Umar, along with' those around them, then rushed to the Saqifa. This version must be rejected on the simple grounds that Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah does not appear anywhere in this tradition, contradicting all other reports, where he is one of the three most important .persons in the whole drama

The second version reports that after confirming the death of the Prophet to the people, Abu Bakr and 'Umar went to the house of the Prophet and joined his relatives, who were busy with the burial preparations. Two informants then came and told them about the Saqifa, whereupon the three-Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Abu 'Ubayda–ran to the .Saqifa

This version also does not appear to be correct because: ۱: it presupposes that these three most important companions were completely unaware of both the serious tension, often conflict, which had been developing over the last few years between the Muhajirun and the Ansar, and the gravity of the situation under the circumstances; ۲: it contradicts 'Umar's statement that 'Ali and his supporters separated themselves from the others and locked the door of the house; ۳: it is a .tradition recorded only by Baladhuri (I, p. ۵۸۱), and on a rather weak isnad

The third version, which is repeatedly narrated by all of our sources with the exception of Ibn Sa'd, reports that after addressing the people regarding Muhammad's death, Abu Bakr, along with 'Umar and Abu 'Ubayda, went to

.the house of; most probably, Abu 'Ubayda

There they met to deliberate on the critical leadership crisis which had arisen owing to the death of the Prophet, and certainly keeping in view the resentful feelings of the Ansar which had been developing for quite some time.(۱) It was there that the council

of the Muhajirun was interrupted by an informant who rushed in to tell them what the Ansar were doing. Hearing that, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Abu 'Ubayda rushed to the .Saqifa to prevent any unexpected development

:Returning again to 'Umar's speech, we are told

I told Abu Bakr that we should go to our brothers the Ansar, so we went off to go to" them when two honest fellows ['Uwaym b. Sa'ida(۲) and Ma'n b. 'Adi[(۳)] met us and told us of the conclusion the people had come to. They asked us where we were going, and when we told them they said that there was no need for us to approach '.them and we must make our own decision. I said, 'By God, we will go to them

And [when we arrived] we found them [the Ansar] in the hall of Banu Sa'ida. In their midst was a man wrapped up. In answer to my inquiries, they said that he was Sa'd b. 'Ubada and that he was sick. When we sat down there, a speaker pronounced the Shahada and praised God as was fitting and then continued: 'We are God's Helpers and the squadron of Islam. You, O

۱- e.g. Tabari, I, p.۱۶۸۳

۲- Isti'ab, III, p.۱۲۴۸

۳- ibid., IV, p.۱۴۴۱

Muhajirun, are a family of ours and a company of your people have come to settle down [among us].' I [at this point 'Umar interrupted and] said: 'And look, they were .trying to cut us off from our origin and wrest authority from us

When the Ansar's speaker finished, I wanted to speak, for I had prepared a speech in my mind which pleased me much. I wanted to produce it before Abu Bakr and to repulse the roughness and asperity of the speaker of the Ansar. But Abu Bakr said, .'Gently, 'Umar!' I did not like to anger him and so he spoke

He was a man with more knowledge and dignity than I, and by God he did not omit a single word which I had thought of and he uttered it in his inimitable way better than I could have done. Abu Bakr said: 'Ali the good that you have said about yourselves you duly deserve. But the Arabs will not recognize authority except in this tribe [lit. clan] of Quraysh. They are the best and the noblest of the Arabs in descent, blood, and "'.(country [i.e. settled in the centre

An addition from Baladhuri (I, p.۵۸۲) completes Abu Bakr's speech and shows further how he argued against the Ansar: "We are the first people in Islam; and among the Muslims, our abode is in the centre, our descent is noblest, and we are nearer to the Prophet in relation; and you [Ansar] are our brothers in Islam and

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our partners in religion; you helped us, protected us and supported us, may God .reward you His best

So we are the rulers (umara') and you are the deputies (wuzara'). The Arabs will not submit themselves except to this clan of the Quraysh. Certainly a group from among you [present] knows well that the Prophet said, 'The leaders are from the Quraysh (al-a'immat-u min al-Quraysh), therefore, do not compete with your Muhajir brothers in '".what God has bestowed upon them

.Now we return again to 'Umar's speech

Abu Bakr said,] 'So I offer you one of two men; accept whichever you please.' Thus]" saying he took hold of my hand and that of Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah, who was sitting .between us

Nothing he ever said displeased me more than that. By God, I would rather have come forward and have had my head struck off–if that were no sin-than rule over a

...people of whom Abu Bakr was one

In Ya'qubi's account (II, p.۱۲۳), "[Abu Bakr said] The Quraysh are closer to Muhammad than you, so here is 'Umar b. al-Khattab, for whom the Prophet prayed, "O God, confirm his faith," and the other is Abu 'Ubayda, whom the Prophet declared "a trustee of this Umma"; choose either one whom you like and pay homage to him.' But both of them refused and said, 'We cannot take preference over you, you are the companion of the Prophet and only second of the two [in the cave at the time of the Hijra].'"

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one of Baladhuri's accounts (I, p.۵۸۲), when Abu Bakr suggested the name of 'U mar, the latter exclaimed: "And while you are alive? Who could set you aside from your place in which the Prophet had installed you?" Ya'qubi (II, p.۱۲۳) describes Abu 'Ubayda as saying: "O people of Ansar, you were the first to help [Islam] so do not be the first to differ and change."

Ya'qubi continues: "Then 'Abd ar- Rahman b. 'Awf stood and said: 'You have your merits, but you do not have [any one among you] like Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Ali.' On this, one of the Ansar, AI-Mundhir b. Arqam,(۱) sharply replied: 'We do not reject the merits you have mentioned; indeed there is among you one with whom no one can dispute, if he seeks this authority, and that man is 'Ali b. Abi Talib.'"

It was at this stage of suggestions and counter suggestions by Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Abu 'Ubayda for each other that Al-Hubbab b. Mundhir(۲) from the Ansar offered a compromise solution. Thus continues 'Umar:

One of the Ansar said, 'I am the rubbing post and the fruitful propped-up palm [i.e. a“ man who can cure people's ills and is held in high esteem because of his great experience]. Let us have one ruler from among ourselves, and another ruler from among yourselves, O Quraysh.' Altercations waxed hotter and voices were raised until, when a complete breach was to be feared, I said, 'Stretch forth your hand, Abu Bakr.' He

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.ibid., p.۱۴۴۹. His father's name must be 'Arfaja -۱

ibid., I., p. ۳۱۶ -۲

did so and I paid him homage; the Muhajirun followed and then the Ansar. [In doing so] we jumped on Sa'd b. 'Ubayda and someone said that we had killed him. I said, '”.'God kill him

Here ends 'Umar's historic speech, accepted by almost all of those who wrote on the Saqifa. Before we proceed further it might be of interest to note 'Umar's reply to Hubbab's suggestion as it is recorded by Tabari (I, p.۱۸۴۱) in a separate account narrated by Abu Mikhnaf: ”'Umar said: 'How preposterous; two swords cannot be in one sheath. By God, the Arabs will never agree to your authority while their Prophet is '”.[from others [i.e. from ourselves

It is also Tabari (I, p. ۱۸۱۸) who records for us from one of his most trusted and frequently cited authorities, Abu Ma'shar, that even after 'Umar's homage to Abu Bakr, there were still some of the Ansar who protested against the decision and exclaimed: “We will not pay our homage to anyone except 'Ali.” But this and some other similar voices were lost in the tumult and, following the examples of 'Umar and Abu 'Ubayda, those of the Muhajirun present paid homage to Abu Bakr, and were .followed by the. Ansar for one reason or another, as we shall see presently

Before we describe the events which followed the assembly of Saqifa, it would be helpful to examine briefly the complex situation and unique circumstances which made Abu Bakr's(۱) selection possible. Firstly, clan rivalries among the Quraysh, or

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On these rivalries, see Montgomery Watt, Muhammad at Mecca, pp. ۴-۸, ۱۶-۲۰, ۱۴۱- -۱ ۴; idem, Muhammad at Medina (Oxford, ۱۹۵۶), pp.۱۵۱-۹۱

among the Muhajirun in particular, made it easier for them to accept the leadership of Abu Bakr- a man of an insignificant branch, Banu Taym b. Murra.(۱)

Because of its inconspicuous place among Meccan ruling clans, Banu Taym had never been involved in the power struggle and political conflicts that had plagued the rival clans of the Quraysh.

Secondly, the Muhajirun, as a whole, were also fearful of the possibility of Medinan domination should the' Muhajirun involve themselves in their own clannish rivalries and internecine fighting. To them Abu Bakr was thus the best compromise candidate.

Thirdly, as far as the Ansar were concerned, we should take note of the deep-rooted and old enmity between the Banu Aws and the Banu Khazraj. Sa'd b. 'Ubada was the chief of the Khazraj; the Banu Aws accordingly found it much more tolerable and profitable to submit themselves to a Qurayshite leader than to allow a chief of the rival tribe to rule over them. This is evident from the fact that the first among the Ansar to pay homage to Abu Bakr was one of the chiefs of the Banu Aws, Usayd b. Hudayr.(۲)

According to Tabari (I, p.۱۸۴۳), "Some of the Aws, among them Usayd b. Hudayr, spoke among themselves, saying, 'By God, if the Khazraj become rulers over you once, they will continue to maintain this superiority over you and will never let you have any share in it, so stand up and pay homage to Abu Bakr.' Then they [the

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۱- Isti'ab, II, p. ۵۹۴

۲- ibid., I., pp.۹۲ if. Ya'qubi's description of him (II, p.۱۲۴) as a Khazraji leader must be a scribal error.

Aws] stood and paid homage to Abu Bakr." We may also recall that this Usayd '۰. Hudayr was the only one from the Ansar who took part if' the deliberations of the Muhajirun, certainly knowing of Sa'd b. 'Ubada's candidacy and thus acting against him and the Khazraj.

As for the Banu Khazraj, they realized that their position was far too weak to face a united front of the Muhajirun and the Banu Aws, their old rivals, or rather enemies, in the city politics of Medina. The constant wars and deadly feuds between the Aws and the Khazraj are commonplace stories of the ayyam al-'Arab ("Battle Days") literature.

Thus the Khazraj found it unwise to lag behind in giving support to and gaining the favour of the ruling authority upon which agreement had very nearly been reached. Moreover, Sa'd b. 'Ubada was envied by some of his own cousins or clansmen, as was a common feature of the Arab clans; and according to some the first who paid homage to Abu Bakr was Sa'd's own cousin Bashir b. Sa'd.(۱) It is thus clear that as a result of group politics, clan rivalries, and personal jealousies, Abu Bakr was able to exact homage from most of the people.

To these factors must be added the overall impression in the sources that Abu Bakr did enjoy a certain prestige and was held in high esteem for his sobriety, old age, his close association with and support of Muhammad, and his valuable services to

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۱- Isti'ab, I., pp.۱۷۲ if. Our sources are not clear on who paid homage first. Ya'qubi, loc. cit., says it was Bashir b. Sa'd, while according to Baladhuri, I, p. ۵۸۲, it was Usayd b.

.Hudayr

.Islam from the very advent of the Prophet's mission

Thus the impact of his personality, which grew over the years under the Prophet, should not be ignored in analysing the results of the Saqifa. The material preserved in the sources also strongly suggests that Abu Bakr and 'Umar had formed an alliance long before, possibly with Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah as a third member, and that these three did carry considerable weight and influence in the newly emerging Islamic (nobility, as well as in group politics against the old Meccan aristocracy.(١

Finally, it must also be noted that Abu Bakr's succession was realized neither through a free election in any sense of the term nor through a free choice of the community. It was simply a decision by a particular group from among the Muhajirun which was hastily forced or thrust upon all others. Its success was due only to the delicate existing group conflicts in Medina. This is obvious from 'Umar's own statement quoted "above that, "Admittedly it was a hasty affair (falta) but God averted the evil of it

The arguments advanced by 'Umar and Abu 'Ubayda in favour of Abu Bakr-lineage in the Quraysh, early conversion to Islam, long companionship to the Prophet, services to the cause of Islam, and lastly his close relationship to and the esteem in which he was held by Muhammad—are in effect of the same nature as those advanced in favour of 'Ali against Abu Bakr, and they certainly lend more strength

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See Henri Lammens, "Le 'triumvirat' Abou Bakr, 'Omar, et Abo 'Obaida", Melanges -١ de la Faculte Orientale de l'Universite St Joseph de Beyrouth, IV (١٩١٠), pp.١١٣-۴۴

to 'Ali's claims than to those of Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr's only exclusive claim to the succession- his leadership of the prayer during the Prophet's illness reflects later theological colour, and the traditions pertaining to it are often confused and .contradictory

Keeping in view the arguments and counter-arguments at the Saqifa, the choice of Abu Bakr seems to have been an accident of circumstances. The conflict between the supporters and the opponents of Abu Bakr centred on considerations of what is necessary under the circumstances, and what ought to be. The former principle soon resulted in the establishment of a mighty and sweeping caliphate-empire. The latter principle of what ought to be led a group of the community, though small, to develop .its own interpretation of Islamic ideals and polity

The task of consolidation of Abu Bakr's authority as the successor to the Prophet, however, was still far from complete after the Saqifa meeting. 'Ali b. Abi Talib, the most important candidate from the Prophet's family, as is unanimously attested by Sunni and Shi'i sources alike, along with his Close associates and the family of Hashim, was not even aware of the decision taken in the Saqifa. They came to hear about it only when, after securing homage at the Saqifa, Abu Bakr, along with his supporters, came to the mosque of the Prophet and an unusual tumult arose from the gathered .mob

Though the timing of the events which followed is confused,(١) it is perhaps at this point that 'Ali and

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From here on, our sources are utterly confused about the timing of the sequence of -١ events, since each tradition is recorded separately. We are not, therefore, sure whether the demand of homage from 'Ali and his supporters was made immediately after they came to the mosque from the Saqifa, or after the burial of the Prophet on the following day when general homage was being paid to Abu Bakr. A careful reading of the sources (e.g. Baladhuri, I, p. ٥٨٢) strongly suggests, however, that it was .demanded as soon as they came to the mosque from the Saqifa

a number of his supporters both from the Ansar and the Muhajirun assembled in

Fatima's house and started deliberating on what was to be done. Besides numerous references to this effect, it is also supported by the first part of 'Umar's speech when he said, “And 'Ali and Zubayr with their companions withdrew from us.”

Abu Bakr and 'Umar, fully aware of 'Ali's claims and also of the respect he commanded in a certain group of the companions, and fearing lest there be some serious reaction on his and his partisans' part, summoned them to the mosque to pay homage. They refused to come. 'Umar, with his cut-and-thrust policy, advised Abu Bakr to act promptly before it was too late.

The two men marched to 'Ali's house with an armed party, surrounded the house, and threatened to set it on fire if 'Ali and his supporters would not come out and pay homage to the elected caliph. 'Ali came out and attempted to remonstrate, putting forward his own claims and rights and refusing to honour Abu Bakr and 'Umar's demands.

The scene soon grew violent, the swords flashed from their scabbards, and 'Umar with his band tried to pass on through the gate. Suddenly Fatima appeared before them in a furious temper and reproachfully cried: “You have left the body of the Apostle of God with us and you have decided among yourselves without consulting us, and without respecting our rights. Before God, I say, either you get out

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of here at once, or with my hair dishevelled I will make my appeal to God.”

This made the situation most critical, and Abu Bakr's band was obliged to leave the house without securing 'Ali's homage.(۱) He could not, however, resist for long and had to yield before the growing pressure. The traditions vary and are often contradictory as to when he was reconciled with Abu Bakr. According to one or two very weak and isolated traditions, which clearly reflect later theological tendency, 'Ali paid homage to Abu Bakr instantly, only complaining that he had not been consulted;

according to some others he did so the same day but under compulsion and with the .conviction that he had better claims to the office

But according to the most commonly reported traditions, which must be accepted as authentic because of overwhelming historical evidence and other circumstantial reasons, 'Ali held himself apart until the death of Fatima six months later.(۲) Insisting that 'Ali should have been chosen, a number of his partisans from among both the Ansar and the Muhajirun who had delayed for some time in accepting Abu Bakr's .succession were fain to yield, however

They gradually, one after the other, were reconciled to the situation and swore allegiance to Abu Bakr. Their names and number vary in different sources, but the most distinguished among them and most commonly recorded by the majority of the (sources are as follows.(۳

۱ Hudhayfa b. al-Yaman,(۴) a Medinese halif of the Aws and a most distinguished

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۱- Many versions of this tradition may be found in Baladhuri, I, pp. ۵۸۵ f.; Ya'qubi, II, p. iz۶; Tabari, I, p. ۱۸۱۸; Abu Bakr al- Jawhari in Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-Balagha, II, pp.۴۷, ۵۰, ۵۶ f.; 'Iqd, IV, pp.۲۵۹ f. Al-Imama Wa's-Siyasa, I, pp.۱۲-۱۳, (though its attribution to Ibn Qutayba is incorrect, it is certainly a very early work extremely rich in sources) gives a very detailed account of the episode of 'Umar and Abu Bakr's attack on the house of Fatima and the force used to secure 'Ali's homage. Also L. V. Vaglieri, EP article "Fatima", who, commenting on these events, says "Even if they have been ".expanded by invented details, they are based on facts

۲- Ya'qubi, II, p. ۱۲۶; Baladhuri, I, p. ۵۸۶; Tabari, I, p. ۱۸۲۵; 'Iqd, IV, p.۲۶۰; Hadid, II, p.۲۲

۳- For the details and certain differences in names see Ya'qubi, loc. cit.; Baladhuri, I, p. ۵۸۸; 'Iqd, IV, p.۲۵۹; Hadid, II, pp. ۵۰ ff.

۴- Ibn Sa'd, VI, p.۱۵; Isti'ab, I, p.۳۳۴

Companion of the Prophet. Known as a great warrior who fought at Uhud and served

the Prophet as a special counsellor at Khandaq, his personal loyalty and attachment to 'Ali remained unchanged even after his allegiance to Abu Bakr. Before his death, he asked his two sons to support 'Ali, which they did until they were killed at the battle of .Siffin while fighting for 'Ali against Mu'awiya

Khuzayma b. Thabit,(۱) from the tribe of Aws, whom the Prophet called "Dhu'sh- ۲
Shahadatayn", the one whose testimony was worth that of two men. He fought alongside 'Air at (۵۲) the battles of Al-Jamal and Siffin and was killed in the latter by .Mu'awiya's army

Abu Ayyub al-Ansari,(۲) whose father, Khalid b. Kulayb, belonged to Banu Najjar and ۳
whose mother was from the Khazraj. He was one of the most important Companions among the Ansar and was the host of the Prophet in Medina until his house was built. .He fought for the cause of 'Ali in the battles of Al-Jamal, Siffin, and Nahrawan

Sahl b. Hunayf,(۳) from the tribe of Aws, who fought for the Prophet at Badr and ۴
other battles. He was a great friend of 'Ali, came with him from Medina to Basra, and fought at

.Siffin. 'Ali appointed him governor of Persia

Uthman b. Hunayf,(۴) brother of Sahl and a great favourite of 'Ali, who appointed' ۵
.him governor of Basra

Al-Bara'a b. 'Azib al-Ansari ,(۵) from the tribe of Khazraj and one of the aristocrats of ۶
Medina representing pro-'Alid

Ibn Sa'd, IV, pp. ۳۷۸ ff.; Isti'ab, II, p.۴۴۸ -۱

Ibn Sa'd, III, pp ۴۸۴ ff.; Isti'ab, II, p.۴۲۴; IV, p. ۱۶۰۶ -۲

Ibn Sa'd, III, pp.۴۷۱ f.; Isti'ab, II, p.۶۶۲ -۳

Isti'ab, III, p.۱۰۳۳ -۴

Ibn Sa'd, IV, p.۳۶۴; Isti'ab, I, pp.۱۵۵ f -۵

.Ansar

.He came with 'Ali to Kufa and fought for him at Al-Jamal, Siffin, and Nahrawan

Ubayy b. Ka'b,(۱) from a branch of the Banu Khazraj and one of the leading jurists ۷ .and Qur'an readers among the Ansar

Abu Dharr b. Jundab al-Ghifari,(۲) one of the earliest followers of Muhammad, an ۸ ascetic, and extremely devoted to piety. He had always been a most vocal supporter of 'Ali and is one of the four pillars of the first Shi'a. The Caliph 'Uthman exiled him to .his birthplace, a small village known as Rabdha, where he died

Ammar b. Yasir,(۳) a south Arabian affiliated with the clan of Makhzum of the' ۹ .Quraysh, an early convert to Islam, and one of the four pillars of the first Shi'a

Al-Miqdad b. 'Amr,(۴) a south Arabian either from Kinda or Bahra, adopted by a ۱۰ certain Aswad b. 'Abd Yathuth of the Banu Makhzum. He was one of the seven early converts to

.Islam and one of the four pillars of the first Shi'a

Salman al-Farisi,(۵) a Persian by origin and an ardent follower and companion of the ۱۱ Prophet, who ransomed him from slavery and adopted him as his mawla and member of the Ahl al-Bayt. He had always been an ardent supporter of 'Air, and his support to 'Ali at the time of Abu Bakr's selection has been mentioned distinctly even by .Baladhuri

Az-Zubayr b. al-'Awwam,(۶) one of the most distinguished Companions of the ۱۲ Prophet from the Quraysh. He was the most energetic supporter of 'Ali

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.Ibn Sa'd, III, p. ۴۹۸; Isti'ab, I, pp. ۶۵ f -۱

.Ibn Sa'd, IV, p.۲۱۹; Isti'ab, IV, pp.۱۶۵۲ f -۲

Ibn Sa'd, III, p. ۲۴۶; Isti'ab, III, pp.۱۱۳۵ ff -۳

Isti'ab, IV, pp.۱۴۸۰ ff -۴

Ibn Sa'd, IV, p.۷۵; Isti'ab, II, p.۶۳۴ -۵

Isti'ab, II, p.۵۱۰ -۶

and no doubt sincere in his enthusiastic attitude. He came out of the house of Fatima, sword in hand, when 'Umar arrived there and tried to force those in the house to pay .homage to Abu Bakr

A serious encounter between him and 'Umar is recorded by almost all of our historians. It was, however, only twenty-five years later that ambition made him strive for the caliphate, which resulted in the battle of al-Jamal between him and 'Ali. Khalid b. Sa'id,(۱) from the clan of Umayya, only third or fourth after Abu Bakr to become Muslim, and the only one from this clan who seriously resisted Abu Bakr's .succession in favour of 'Ali

As the representative of the Prophet, he was at San'a' when Muhammad died. When he reached Medina a few days after Abu Bakr's selection, he offered his allegiance to 'Ali saying, “By God, no one among all the men is more entitled to take the place of

Muhammad than you." Though 'Ali declined to accept his homage, Khalid refused to .recognize Abu Bakr for three months

The seriousness of their opposition to or resentment of Abu Bakr before they become reconciled to him is almost impossible to ascertain, since the Shi'i sources exaggerate this to the extreme(۲) whereas the Sunni sources try to ignore or minimize it as much as possible.(۳) Historically it cannot be denied, however, that these men formed the .nucleus of the first 'Alid party, or the Shi'a

It cannot be claimed that all were equally

Ibn Sa'd, IV, p.۹۷ Isti'ab, II, pp.۴۲۰ ff For his support to 'A۱i, see Baladhuri, I, p.۵۸۸; -۱ Ya'qubi, p. ۱۲۶; Hadid, II, p.۵۸

e.g. see Tabarsi, Ihtijaj, I, pp.۱۱۸-۸۹ -۲

e.g. see Ibn Sa'd, III, pp. ۱۸۱-۵ -۳

enthusiastic and warm supporters; some of them were lukewarm supporters who recognized 'Ali's position as the most worthy for the office of the caliphate because of his personal merits, but nevertheless paid homage to Abu Bakr without much .resentment

The attitude of 'Ammar, Miqdad, Abu Dharr, and Salman must have been different from that of the others. These four companions are regarded by all the Shi'is as "the Four Pillars" (al-arkan al-arba'a) who formed the first Shi'a of 'Ali. After 'Ali's compromise with Abu Bakr, however, reasons for further opposition on the part of his supporters ceased to exist and this elite of the first Shi'a dwindled away physically. But can ideas, once introduced, ever die out? The later years in the history of the .development of Islamic thought provide an answer to this question

Chapter ٣: 'Ali and the First Two Caliphs

The discussion above will suffice to elucidate our view that the origins of Shi'i feelings and inclinations may be found in the conception of the sanctity for which the Banu Hashim were widely known, in the special consideration with which 'Ali was held by Muhammad (who was, above all, fully conscious of his family's traditionally religious heritage and exalted position), and lastly, in the events in favour of 'Ali which took .place during Muhammad's lifetime

Since the first convergence of these convictions focused on the questions and issues involved in the Saqifa incident, this episode marks both the first open expression of and the point of departure for what ultimately developed into the Shi'i

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understanding of Islam. However, after the initial defeat of 'Ali's supporters and his own recognition of Abu Bakr's administration six months later, circumstances were .such that Shi'i tendencies lost most of their open and active manifestations

The period of the caliphates of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, between the Saqifa episode and the Shura (the election of 'Uthman), is thus one of comparative dormancy in the .history of the development of Shi'ism

Nevertheless, a close scrutiny of the early sources, and especially a careful comparison of the Shi'i and Sunni early records, reveals two distinct and important undercurrents in operation throughout this period ; firstly, 'Ali's passive attitude towards the ruling authorities; and secondly, the attempts of Abu Bakr and 'Umar to displace Banu Hashim, and especially 'Ali, from their prerogative claims to the leadership of the community according to their own understanding of the new order and the form they felt it should take. Both of these trends apparent in this period form an inseparable phase in the development of Shi'i ideas and therefore should be taken

.into consideration

Ali's passive attitude can easily be illustrated by comparing the active role played by' him during the lifetime of Muhammad with his completely inactive and withdrawn life .in the period immediately following the Prophet's death

The most active and enthusiastic participant in all the enterprises in the cause of Islam and a great warrior in the forefront of all the battles fought under ,Muhammad,(۱) 'Ali suddenly reverted to leading a quiet life

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For 'Ali's active participation and unceasing services in furthering the cause of – ۱ Islam during Muhammad's lifetime, the fullest and most reliable source is Ibn .Hisham's Sira

almost confined to the four walls of his house. This marked contrast cannot have been without serious causes.(۱) Seeing 'Ali's firm conviction that he had the best claims to succeed Muhammad, as is evident from all the sources, one would have expected him .to fight for his rights to the bitter end

He did not resort to this course of action, however, even though such opportunities presented them selves. He declined to make use of the strong military support offered to him by Abu Sufyan to fight for his rights, for he considered that such action (would lead to the destruction of infant Islam.(۲

At the same time, on the other hand, he did not recognize Abu Bakr and refused to pay him homage for six months. In addition to the demoralizing factor of Fatima's death, which occurred six months after the succession of Abu Bakr, what perhaps compelled 'Ali to reconcile his position with the existing order was the serious eruption .of apostasy and rebellion among the Arab tribes in the peninsula

This coincidence of Abu Bakr's succession and the rebellion of the tribes naturally

forced people in Medina to forget whatever ideological or personal differences they had and to unite themselves against a common danger. Such a serious external threat to the very existence of the Islamic order proved to be a great advantage to Abu Bakr in reducing internal opposition to his rule.

The character of 'Ali as presented by both Sunni and Shi'i sources alike suggests

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۱- This contrast is pointed out by Veccia Vaglieri, in EI۲ article "'Ali."

۲- Tabari, I, p.۱۸۲۷; Baladhuri, I, p.۵۸۸

that his feelings of love, dedication, sincerity, and undivided loyalty to the cause of Islam were above personal considerations. From the age of thirteen he had been committed to the service of the mission of the Prophet; seeing such a dangerous and widespread rebellion of the tribes against Islam, 'Ali had no choice but to reconcile himself with the existing order. This he did. But he did not take any active part in any of the apostasy wars, thus still preserving his withdrawn attitude; nor did Abu Bakr ask him to participate in the wars outside Medina.

In spite of maintaining his withdrawn and passive attitude towards Abu Bakr and 'Umar, 'Ali did occasionally help the caliphs. This co-operation rendered to the ruling caliphs appears to have been of the same nature as that expected of any reasonable opposition leader. He recognized that, under the circumstances, the solidarity, security, and integrity of the community could only be preserved if the diverse groups which it comprised were willing to co-operate and maintain harmonious relations among themselves. Yet within this framework he attempted, again as was to be expected, to correct what he regarded as mistakes of the government, and criticized policies which differed from his viewpoint.

The points of difference in religious and political matters between 'Ali on the one hand, and Abu Bakr and 'Umar on the other, are difficult to ascertain because both the Sunni and the Shi'i source materials are extremely tendentious. The Sunni sources, such as the works of

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Ibn Sa'd and those who followed him, were written in the period when the recognition of the first four caliphs as the Rashidun was firmly established in the fama'a.

(The English term "orthodoxy", which is usually used for the central body of the Muslims, is in an Islamic context not only incorrect but misleading; we shall therefore use the Arabic term fama'a for this so-called orthodoxy.)

Naturally, every effort was made to show as much agreement as possible, at least between 'Ali, Abu Bakr, and 'Umar. 'Uthman tends to be excluded in religious and political matters, though attempts were nevertheless made to save even 'Uthman's position by blaming the abuses of his caliphate on Marwan, his notorious secretary.

On the other hand, the Shi'i sources give a completely different and extreme view of 'Ali's disagreement, not only with 'Uthman, but also with Abu Bakr and 'Umar, on almost every matter, whether religious or political. In short, according to the Sunni sources, 'Ali was a valued counsellor of the caliphs who preceded him.

According to the Shi'i sources, he was the person who, dominated by his heroic love and sense of sacrifice for the faith and disregarding his personal grievances, saved the caliphs from committing the serious mistakes to which they were often prone and which would otherwise have been suicidal for Islam. 'Umar is thus often reported to have said: "Had there not been 'Ali, 'Umar would have perished." It is very interesting to note that this statement is reported

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by some of the important early Sunni authors too.(۱)

Apart from some of the serious points of disagreementbetween 'Ali and his first two successful rivals, for which there is unanimous historical testimony, as we shall point out below, exactitude in the determination of the mass of this material is probably beyond our reach. The truth, however, seems to have been, as Veccia Vaglieri suggests, that "'Ali was included in the council of the caliphs, but although it is probable that he was asked for advice on legal matters in view of his excellent knowledge of the Qur'an and the Sunna, it is extremely doubtful whether his advice was accepted by 'Umar, who had been a ruling power even during the caliphate of Abu Bakr."(٢)

Moreover, evidence of 'Ali's opinions not being accepted on religious matters is manifested in the fact that his decisions very seldom find a place in the later developed Sunni schools of law, whereas 'Umar's decisions find common currency among them. On the other hand, 'Ali is a frequently quoted authority on matters of law in all Shi'i branches.(٣)

On political and administrative matters, his disagreement with 'Umar on the question of Diwan (distribution of stipends) and his absence from all the wars fought under 'Umar can be well cited. Without further elaboration, it may safely be assumed from our evidence that, regardless of the exact nature of his feelings and aspirations, 'Ali maintained a passive and withdrawn attitude towards the caliphates of both Abu Bakr and 'Umar.

١- e.g. Isti'ab, III, p.١١٠۴. For Shi'i sources see Majlisi, Bihar, VIII, p.۵٩; Ihtijaj, I, p.١٠٣

٢- L.V. Vaglieri, EI٢ article "'Ali"

٣- For the Ithna 'Asharites, see Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi and Furu' al-Kafi; for the

Isma'ilites, see Qadi Nu'man, Da'a'im al-Islam

accepted the political realities of his day, but never the less remained convinced of the fact that he was better qualified for the caliphate and that he had been unjustly deprived of the leadership of the community. 'Ali's feelings regarding his predecessors are best expressed in his own words in one of his famous speeches at the mosque of .Kufa during his own caliphate

This historic exposition of 'Ali, known as ash-Shaqshiqiyya, is recorded by Ash-Sharif ar-Radi in the Nahj al-Balagha,(۱) which contains 'Ali's sermons, speeches, letters, and maxims. As with most of the material presented in this valuable work, there can hardly be any doubt as to the authenticity of this speech, since it was reported by :many early authors long before Ash-Sharif ar-Radi 'Ali says

Nay, by God, the son of Abu Quhafa [Abu Bakr] had exacted the caliphate for himself" while he knew full well that my position in it was like that of the pivot in a mill; the flood waters flow down beneath me and the birds do not soar high up to me; yet I hung up a curtain before it and turned aside from it [the caliphate]. I then started thinking whether I should attack with a severing hand or should watch patiently the blind darkness in which the old man becomes decrepit and the young man old, in which the believer tries his utmost till he meets his Lord, and I came to the conclusion that patience in a situation like this was

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۱- Some scholars have questioned the authenticity of the Nahj al- Balagha and have suggested that it was written by Ash-Sharif ar- Radi himself and attributed to 'Ali. This allegation, in light of my own research on the subject, is absolutely without foundation. Ash- Sharif ar-Radi, the compiler of the Nahj al-Balagha, died in ۴۰۶/۱۱۱۵, but most of the material of the Nahj al-Balagha I have found word-for-word in sources written long before the fifth century of Islam. These sources include, for example, Nasr b. Muzahim al- Minqari's Waq'at Siffin, Ya'qubi's Ta'rikh, Jahiz Al-Bayan

wa'l- Tabyin, Mubarrad's Kamil, Baladhuri's Ansab al-Ashraf and many other standard works of the second, third, and fourth centuries. I am currently preparing a critical translation of the Nahj al-Balagha in which these sources will be fully analyzed and .cited

wiser. So I adopted patience, although there was a mote rankling in my eye and a bone sticking in my throat on seeing my heritage being plundered, till the first one [Abu Bakr] died and handed over the reins of the caliphate to another person ['Umar] after him. [Here 'Ali quotes a verse from the poet A'sha, which reads] 'How vast is the difference between this day of mine when I am on the back of the camel [i.e. suffering from the hardship of a rough journey] and the day of Hayyan, brother of Jabir [i.e. when he was comfortably placed under the power and prestige of Hayyan.(١) How hard did they [Abu Bakr and 'Umar] squeeze its udders and how they made it [the caliphate] travel on a rugged path, which inflicts deep wounds and is rough to the touch, in which one stumbles frequently and has to offer excuses, so that its rider is like the rider of a difficult mount: if he draws its reins tight, its nose is pierced, and if he relaxes it, he plunges into destruction. And so the people were afflicted, by God, with stumbling, refractoriness, capriciousness, and cross-purposes. But I kept patience in spite of the length of time and the severity of the ordeal, until he ['Umar] went his (way."(٢

Ali thus describes his feelings towards the reign of his two predecessors and' summarizes their periods in the caliphate. Ibn Abi 'l-Hadid, writing a long commentary on this speech, explains major characteristics

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Hayyan had a princely estate in Al-Yamaha where he used to keep the poet A'sha, -١ of the tribe of Banu Qays, under his protection and in luxury and comfort. After the death of Hayyan the poet lost all those privileges and was stricken by poverty, wandering about from place to place. By quoting a'sha, 'Ali compares his prestigious

status and active life during the lifetime of the Prophet with the negligent attitude of the people towards him after the death of the Prophet. See Hadid, Sharh, I, pp. ۱۶۶ f.

۲- Nahj al-Balagha, ed. Muhammad Abu'l-Fadl Ibrahim (Cairo, ۱۹۶۳), I, p.۲۹. For other references before Ash-Sharif ar-Radi see Ibn Abel's Hadid, Sharh, I, pp.۲۰۵ f. and passim, where Abu Ja'far Ahmad b. Muhammad (d. ۲۷۴/۸۸۷) Kitab al-Mahasin, Ibrahim h. Muhammad ath-Thaqafi (d. ۲۸۳/۸۹۶) Kitab al-Gharat, Abu 'Ali Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Jubba'i (d. ۳۰۳/۹۱۵), and Abu 'l-Qasim al-Balkhi (d. ۵۰۲/۱۱۰۸) Kitab al-Insaf, are quoted. Also see Saduq (d. ۳۸۱/۹۹۱), 'Ilal ash-Shara'i', p. ۶۸; Ma'ani, Al-Akhbar, p.۱۳۲; Mufid (d. ۴۱۳/۱۰۲۲), Irshad, p. ۱۶۶; Tusi (d. ۴۶۰/۱۰۶۷), Amali; p.۲۳۷

of the first two caliphs, their policies in arranging the affairs of the community, their attitude towards 'Ali, and 'Ali's reservations about the handling of matters by them.

We may now turn to the second observation made above concerning this interim period in the development of Shi'ism: the attempts made by both Abu Bakr and 'Umar to displace the Banu Hashim in general and 'Ali in particular from prerogatives in the leadership of the Umma. The first and most important step in this direction was taken by Abu Bakr on the day following the Prophet's death, when Fatima came to claim the estate of Fadak. She asserted that this estate was given to her father unconditionally as his share of the spoils of Khaybar.(۱) Quoting Muhammad's words: "We [the Prophets] do not leave as inheritance what we make legal alms," Abu Bakr refused her claim, maintaining that Fadak belonged to the community as a whole and that Fatima, although entitled to the usufruct, could not hold the right of ownership.(۲)

This question of inheritance soon became one of the most debated problems in the conflict between the Shi'a and their opponents.(۳) It might seem that Abu Bakr's refusal in effect meant that no claims would be justified on family grounds.

To acknowledge the justice of one claim of inheritance based on family ties would open the door to further and more extensive claims, and Abu Bakr felt that to accept

the rights of the family of 'Ali to the inheritance of Fadak might

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۱- Ibn Sa'd, II, pp. ۳۱۴ ff; Ibn Hisham, III, pp.۳۵۲, ۳۶۸; Ya'qubi, II, p.۱۲۷; Isti'ab, II, p.۵۷'. Also cf. Vaglieri, EI۲ article "Fadak". For the Shi'i position see Tabarsi, Ihtijaj, I, pp.۱۳۱-۱۴۹

۲- Various versions in Ibn Sa'd, II, pp. ۳۱۴ ff; Bukhari, Sahih, II p. ۴۳۵. For the Shi'i position, see Ya'qubi, II, p.۱۲۷, also Amini, A'yan, II, pp.۴۶۱ ff.

۳- Jahiz, Rasa'il, ed. Sandubi, "Min Kitabihi fi'l-'Abbasiyya", p.۳۰۰

be regarded as equal to admitting their rights to the succession of the Prophet in all spheres, spiritual as well as material.

This fear was perhaps based on the grounds that Muhammad, as leader of the community, was entitled to one fifth of the spoils of war (Khums), and by this special right he became owner of the Fadak. To inherit a property as a token of an exalted position and prerogative was somewhat different from an ordinary inheritance. It is almost unanimously reported that after this event Fatima did not speak to either Abu Bakr or 'Umar till her death six months later. She asked 'Ali to have her buried at night, and not to allow Abu Bakr and 'Umar to take part in her funeral. 'Ali accordingly carried out her wishes and buried her at night, with only the family members accompanying her coffin.

The caliphate of Abu Bakr lasted just over two years, and on his deathbed he explicitly appointed 'Umar, already a ruling power behind him, as his successor. The way he arranged the problem of succession after him leaves us in no doubt that Abu Bakr had made up his mind in favour of 'Umar since his assumption of the caliphate. He took careful measures to preclude any possibility of opposition to his nomination of 'Umar and made sure that the latter should not face any difficulty. He was fully aware of 'Ali's claims to the caliphate and the support and respect he enjoyed from a certain

group. Abu Bakr therefore first called 'Abd ar-Rahman b. 'Awf, told him about his decision, and after some persuasion secured his consent. The only other person whom the dying caliph called in to make his decision known was 'Uthman b. 'Affan. When the news of Abu Bakr's decision came out, some of the prominent Companions of the Prophet became extremely disturbed and apprehensive. Under the leadership of Talha, they sent a delegation to protest against the decision and tried to persuade the Caliph not to nominate 'Umar.(۱) Nothing could change Abu Bakr's mind, and he asked 'Uthman to write down his testament in favour of 'Umar. The community at large had no share in the choice and was told by the Caliph to accept his nomination and obey

Umar as the new caliph after him, for he could not think of anyone more suitable than' :him. The testament he announced before the people reads

This is a testament of Abu Bakr, the successor of the Prophet of God, to the believers" and the Muslims... I have appointed as ruler over you 'Umar b. al-Khattab, so listen to (him and obey him. I have not made him your ruler except for [your] good.(۲

Anyone reading the account of 'Umar's nomination by Abu Bakr will immediately notice that the decision was neither based on the method of consultation with the elite of the people, nor was the opinion of the community in general sought before the choice was made. It was simply Abu Bakr's own

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۱- See the whole account in Tabari, I, pp.۲۱۳۷ ff.; Ya'qubi, II, p. ۱۳۶ f.; Hadid, Sharh,, I, p.۱۶۳ ff.

۲- Ya'qubi, ibid.; also see Tabari, I, p. ۲۱۳۸ ; 'Iqd, IV, p. ۲۶۷, with slight variations in

wording

personal and arbitrary decision, which he wanted to be endorsed by only those of the Companions whom he considered most important from a clannish point of view, as .will be seen below

For our interest, however, at once the most important and revealing point is that in this entire process of the nomination of 'Umar by Abu Bakr, 'Ali was totally ignored and excluded from the ranks of those the dying Caliph called for consultation, if consultation it was, and whose support he tried to secure. In fact, as all of our sources unanimously report, from all the Companions of the Prophet only two, 'Abd ar-Rahman b. 'Awf and 'Uthman, were selected by Abu(۶۵)Bakr for consultation and then were entrusted with the charge of wholehearted support for 'Umar.(۱) This in all probability must have been on the suggestion of 'Umar himself, who planned to counteract any possible opposition from the Banu Hashim by appealing to this branch of the Quraysh. 'Abd ar-Rahman belonged to the Banu Zuhra and 'Uthman to the .Banu Umayya, both of which had been serious rivals of Banu Hashim before Islam

The emergence of these two Companions was very characteristic in many ways, especially for the development of the later history of the caliphate, for they represented the wealthiest circles of the Muslim community.(۲) 'Abd ar-Rahman was 'Uthman's brother-in-law, and the two men could be expected to support each other. The former also had the wholehearted support of Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas, a fellow clan member and cousin

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۱- Tabari, I, p.۲۱۳۷; Ya'qubi, loc. cit.; Hadid, Sharh, I, p. ۱۶۴. Also see Mubarrad, Kamil, I, p.۷

۲- cf. Mas'udi, Muruj, II, pp.۳۳۲ f.

.from the Banu Zuhra

In this way the direct support and influence of the most important political elements among the Muhaji- run were secured to oppose any possible activity from the Banu Hashim and their partisans in favour of 'Ali's candidacy. 'Ali's serious disagreements with the policies of 'Umar in both political and religious matters will be discussed below in connection with the selection of 'Uthman. Here it may be pointed out in passing that during the most active and eventful ten years of 'Umar's caliphate, in which the most spectacular conquests of Persian and Byzantine provinces took place and in which all the prominent Companions of the Prophet took active part, 'Ali remained uninvolved. Nor did 'Ali hold any office under 'Umar, as had been the case under Abu Bakr and would continue later under 'Uthman. The only exception was his being in charge of Medina during

Umar's journey to Palestine, when he took with him all the other leading Companions' of the Prophet and military commanders to approve regulations of the conquest and the Diwan. 'Ali alone was absent from the historic surrender of Jerusalem and Syria. 'Umar is reported to have strictly prevented the Banu Hashim from going out of (Medina.(١

This is evident from the very fact that neither 'Ali nor any other member of the Banu .Hashim has been reported to have taken part in any activity outside the capital

Umar's attitude towards 'Ali is best illustrated by a dialogue which took place' between the former and Ibn

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"cf. Vaglieri, EI٢ article "'Ali -١

Abbas. On a certain occasion 'Umar asked Ibn 'Abbas, "Why did 'Ali not join us and co-' operate with us? Why did the Quraysh not support your family while your father is the uncle and you are the cousin of the Prophet?" "I do not know," replied Ibn 'Abbas. "But I know the reason," said 'Umar. "Because the Quraysh did not like to allow both the

Prophethood and the caliphate to be combined in your house, for with this you would (feel arrogant and rejoice."(1)

In another version, when 'Umar heard some verses of Zuhayr b. Abi Sulma which described the glory, nobility of descent, and virtues of the clan of Banu 'Abd Allah b. Ghatfan, he said to Ibn 'Abbas: "I do not know any other clan among the Quraysh to whom these verses can be better applied than the Banu Hashim, because of their relationship and superior claims to the Prophet, but the people did not like to allow the Prophethood and the caliphate in your family so that you would become arrogant and rejoice at it among the people. The Quraysh, therefore, preferred to choose the leader for themselves and they made the right choice and were guided by God in that." "O, Prince of the Faithful," said Ibn 'Abbas, "as for your statement that the Quraysh chose their own leader and were guided in the right choice, it may be correct if the choice of Quraysh for their leader was in the same sense as the choice

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١- Tabari, I, p.٢٧٦٩

.of God from among the Quraysh

As for your statement that the Quraysh did not like to allow both the Prophethood and the caliphate to be with us, it is not surprising, for God has described many people who disliked what God has sent down to them and thus render their deeds fruitless'."(1) At this point 'Umar became angry and said: "I have heard many things about you but I ignored them because of my regard for you. I am told that you think that we have taken away the caliphate from you through oppression and because of envy." "As for oppression, it is evident," said Ibn 'Abbas, "and as concerns envy, so it is obvious; Satan envied Adam and we are the children of Adam." 'Umar lost his temper and retorted, "Alas, O Banu Hashim, your hearts are full of hatred, rancour, and false pretensions." "Be gentle, O Prince of the Faithful," said Ibn 'Abbas, "and do not describe the hearts of the people from whom God has removed all kinds of uncleanliness and purified them with complete purification.(2) Moreover, the Prophet

".himself belonged to the Banu Hashim

Let us leave this topic," said 'Umar.(٣) The dialogue speaks for itself and needs no" comment. It will suffice to say that it is one of the most revealing statements in explaining the attitude of 'Umar towards 'Ali on the one hand, and the Hashimite .attitude towards 'Ali's predecessors in the caliphate on the other

However, the dominating personality of 'Umar and

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Reference to Qur'an, XLVII,٩ -١

Reference to Qur'an, XXXIII, ٣٣ -٢

.Tabari, I, pp.٢٧٧٠ f -٣

his realistic understanding of the tides of the time were strong enough not to allow any manifestation of discontent during his rule, which was continuously involved in the conquest of rich new lands for Islam. The occupation of Abu Bakr with quelling the rebellion of the apostate tribes within the Arabian peninsula, and of 'Umar in conquering foreign lands, served, consciously or unconsciously, to keep internal feuds at rest. On the whole, the caliphate of 'Umar, as that of his predecessor Abu Bakr, characterizes a period in which Islamic ideals of simplicity, justice, equality, devotion to the cause, zeal for the faith, and a socio-economic equilibrium according to their understanding of these, were best represented. After a successful rule of ten years, however, the powerful caliph met his end by the dagger of a Persian slave and died on .٢۶ Dhu'l- Hijja ٢٣/٣ November ۶۴۴

Unlike Abu Bakr, 'Umar during his long caliphate could not develop complete trust and confidence in any one person to justify nominating him as his successor.(١) He nevertheless restricted the choice to six of the early Companions among the

.Muhajirun, who had to choose one of themselves as the new caliph

The members of this committee, later referred to by the Muslim jurists and theorists as the Shura or electorate body, were: 'Uthman, 'Abd ar-Rahman b. 'Awf, Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas, 'Ali, Zubayr, and Talha, with 'Umar's own son 'Abd Allah only in the capacity of an advisor, not as a candidate.(۲) Two conspicuous factors are

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۱- Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah,, in whom 'Umar had full confidence and who was one of the triumvirate, had died in the plague of ۶۳۹-۶۴۰.

۲- Ibn Sa'd, III, pp. ۶i f., pp.۳۳۱ ff; Baladhuri, V, pp. i۶ ff.; Ya'qubi, II, pp. ۱۶۰ ff.; Tabari, II, pp. ۲۷۷۸ ff.; Mas'udi, Tanbih, pp.۲۹۰ f.; Dhahabi, Ta'rikh, II, pp.۷۴ ff.; Hadid, Sharh, I,pp. ۱۶۳ ff; pp. ۱۸۵ ff.; 'Iqd, IV, p.۲۷۵

to be observed here. First, the community at Medina as a whole had no say in the selection of the new leader, as both candidacy and decision-making power were confined to the six persons nominated by the Caliph; thus the principle of so-called democracy or election by the people in choosing their leader cannot be applied.

Second and more important is the fact that the Ansar of Medina were completely excluded from expressing their opinion in the affair of the leadership. Perhaps this was due(۶۸) either to their pro-'Alid sympathies manifested at the Saqifa, or to 'Umar's desire to eliminate any possibility of an Ansari being suggested as a candidate. This proved to be a serious blow to the political influence of the Ansar, and one from which they were never able to recover.

It is not intended to record here in detail the events of the Shura as such, but rather to recall what had a direct bearing on the development of Shi'ism. According to the unanimous account given by our sources, 'Umar meticulously laid down the regulations which had to be followed by the committee.

:These regulations were that

the new caliph must be one of this committee, elected by the majority vote of its : ۱ ;members

that in the case of two candidates having equal support, the one backed by 'Abd ar- :۲ ;Rahman b. 'Awf was to be nominated

that if any member of the council shrank from participating, he was to be beheaded :۳ instantly; and lastly, ۴: that when a

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candidate had been duly elected, in the event of one or two members of the conclave refusing to recognize him, this minority, or, in the case of equal division of three members on each side, the group opposed to 'Abd ar-Rahman, were to be slain. To enforce this order 'Umar called in Abu Talha al- Ansari(۱) of the tribe of Khazraj, commanding him to select fifty trusted persons from his tribe to stand at the door of the assembly with swords in hand to ensure that the members of the committee should follow these orders.(۲) By appointing the Khazrajites, who immediately after the death of the

Prophet had wanted the leadership for themselves, 'Umar guaranteed that his orders .would not be taken lightly

There is hardly any room to doubt the authenticity of the report that 'Umar imposed such stern regulations on the members of the committee. Few accounts in the early history of Islam have received such unanimous historical testimony as that of 'Umar's .arrangements of the Shura and the regulations laid down by him

A comparison of the texts of Baladhuri, Ya'qubi, Tabari; and Mas'udi, followed by numerous other historians such as Dhahabi and Ibn al-Athir, shows that the basic account is the same in all of them. All these writers cite different authorities belonging to different and often conflicting schools of thought and inclination.(۳) Nabia Abbott(۴) has recently published a papyrus fragment of Ibn Ishaq's Ta'rikh al-Khulafa' (with

valuable commentary) which deals with the Shura and the terms fixed by

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Isti'ab, IV, pp. ۱۶۹۷-۹; Tahdhib, III, p.۴۱۴ -۱

Ibn Sa'd; III, pp.۳۴۱ ff.; Baladhuri, V, p. ۱۸; Ya'qubi, II.. p. ۱۶۰; Tabari, I, pp.۲۷۷۰ ff.; -۲ Mas'udi. Tanbih, p.۲۹۱ ; 'Iqd, IV, p.۲۷۵; Hadid, Sharh, I, p. ۱۸۷

e.g., see different isnads in Tabari, loc. cit., and Baladhuri, loc. cit., where the reports -۳ of Muhammad b. Sa'd from Waqidi, a die-hard pro-'Uthinanid, are exactly the same as that of Abu Mikhnaf, a confirmed Shi'i. Even reports going back to 'Umar's son 'Abd .Allah and that of Ibn 'Abbas are the same

Studies, I, pp. ۸۰-۹۹ -۴

Umar. Ibn Ishaq wrote at least one hundred years before any one of the historians' cited above, and it is of great importance to note that the account given by Ibn Ishaq .is strikingly the same

This confirms the account of our historians. Besides this unanimous historical testimony, the circumstances of the time and other guiding factors strongly attest to the accuracy of the account. When we compare 'Umar's characteristic sternness dominant in his personality and the decisive policies that characterized his rule, with the nature of the regulations imposed by him on the members of the electorate council at such a critical moment, the two factors are in conformity with each other. In addition, the manner in which all the historians record the conditions makes it clear that, on the one hand, 'Umar was sure that only one of these six companions could become the next caliph, but, on the other hand, he was certain that they would .oppose each other in order to avail themselves of the opportunity for leadership

He was therefore afraid of critical dissension among the possible candidates and the disastrous consequences this would have for the young community. This is clearly evident from the report that 'Umar called in the members of the Shura and said: "I looked around and found that you are the leaders of the people and the caliphate cannot go except to one of you; but I am afraid that dissension will arise among you

and [because of your dissension] the

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people will also split among themselves.(۱) Thus motivated, he laid down such stringent restrictions as he deemed necessary to protect the community from the .effects of disastrous schism

These measures, however, did simultaneously accomplish two main purposes which seem to have been in the mind of the dying Caliph, and which he must have thought to be in the best interests of the community. On the one hand, these measures saved the young Umma, though only for the time being, from serious dissension; on the other hand, through these meticulous arrangements 'Umar completed the task of keeping the caliphate away from the Banu Hashim, an endeavour he had undertaken immediately after the Prophet's death. Being fully aware of 'Ali's claims and ,remembering that he had not even recognized Abu Bakr for six months

Umar knew that 'Ali would not agree to make his claims the subject of debate in a' self-instituted council of electors unless he was bound to do so under compulsion. Though aware of the considerable ambitions of both Zubayr and Talha, 'Umar also realized that 'Ali and 'Uthman, among all other members of the council, carried much more weight and realistically were the only ones who had the support necessary to advance themselves as serious candidates, each backed by his own clan, the Banu .Hashim and the Banu Umayya respectively

Umar also seems to have realized that 'Ali stood a much better chance of success' now than 'Uthman on the grounds which have been discussed in Chapter I. It was

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Ibn Sa'd, III, pp.۳۴۴ ff.; Baladhuri, V, pp. ۱۶, ۱۸; Tabari, I, p. ۲۷۷۸; 'Iqd, IV, p.۲۷۵ -۱

no longer possible for the Caliph to simply ignore the claims of 'Ali; and had he not

forced him to become a member of the Shura, he would have given the Prophet's cousin and the candidate of the Banu Hashim a free hand to strive for office for himself.(۱) By bestowing both the chairmanship and the final authority of the committee on 'Abd ar-Rahman b. 'Awf, 'Umar effectively blocked the chances of 'All and virtually guaranteed the nomination of 'Uthman. This was such an obvious fact that almost all of our sources record it in the very words of 'Ali himself. When he heard the regulations laid down by 'Umar and that 'Abd ar-Rahman was given the casting ,vote

:Ali remonstrated, saying'

By God, the caliphate (Amr) has again been taken away from us because the final" authority rests in the hands of 'Abd ar-Rahman, who is an old friend and brother-in-law of 'Uthman, whereas Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas is 'Abd ar-Rahman's cousin from the Banu Zuhra; naturally these three will support each other, and even if Zubayr and Talha vote for me it would be of no

use.(۲) In this way, 'Umar dealt a final blow to the superior claims of the Banu Hashim by giving their old rivals, the Banu Umayya, a new lease of power. The clan of Umayya, on its part, saw this as its golden opportunity, and Abu Sufyan in particular regarded the accession of 'Uthman as the return of the entire clan to a position of power

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۱ - See 'Umar's conversation with the members of the Shura and especially with 'Ali and 'Uthman in Tabari, I, p.۲۷۷۹; Baladhuri, V, p. ۱۶. The oldest source or. this subject, the fragment of the Ta'rikh al-Khulafa records the same conversations of 'Umar with the electors and indicates at least 'Umar's awareness (though not his acceptance) of the strength of 'Ali's claims. See Abbott, Studies, I, p. ۸۱. Also see Ibn Sa'd, III, pp.۶۲ and ۳۳۹ ff, where a later version incorporates some dramatic changes in the tradition .at the expense of 'Ali

Baladhuri, V, p. ۱۹; Tabari, I, p.۲۷۸۰; 'Iqd, IV, p.۲۷۶; Hadid, Sharh, I, p.۱۹۱ -۲

which they should at all

costs preserve.(۱) 'Abbas b. 'Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet's uncle and head of the Banu Hashim, is reported to have warned 'Ali not to participate in the Shura and to maintain his freedom of action,(۲) but 'Umar's provisions precluded such a course of action. All of our sources agree that 'Ali yielded only under direct pressure, threatened by fear of arms if he declined to abide by 'Umar's will.(۳) When one recalls 'Ali's protests twelve years earlier against the nomination of Abu Bakr after the death of the Prophet, it is not difficult to imagine how deeply disappointed 'Ali must have been to see, for a third time, another man given preference over him. This he describes in his speech of Ash-Shaqshiqiyya, the first part of which has been quoted above:

"Umar [from his deathbed] entrusted it [the choice of caliph] to six persons among whom he claimed one was I. By God, and what a council [i.e., "what chance did I stand in it?"]. When did doubt about me cross anyone's mind, even in the case of the first of them [Abu Bakr] so that I was associated to a member of his like?(۴) But I went along with them in all situations and I dropped low when they dropped and flew up when they flew. Then one of them [Sa'd] inclined towards his companion ['Abd ar-Rahman] while 'Abd ar-Rahman swayed in favour of his brother-in-law ['Uthman], and they did other unmentionable things.(۵)

It is by no

۱- Aghani; VI, pp.۳۳۴ f.

۲- Baladhuri, V, p.۱۹; Tabari, I, p.۲۷۸۰; 'Iqd, IV, pp.۲۷۵ f.

۳- Baladhuri, V, pp. ۲۱ f.; Tabari, I, pp.۲۷۷۹ f.

۴- i.e. "When my personal excellence was not questionable in comparison to Abu Bakr, how can it be then compared to men like Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas, 'Abd ar-Rahman, and

"?.'Uthman etc

See note ۸ above -۵

means easy to establish what really transpired in the deliberations and debates of the council which resulted in the appointment of 'Uthman. In the mass of the material handed down to us, there is, however, a commonly reported tradition, at once very important and most revealing. It is said that, after three days of long debates and wrangling, at the time of the morning prayer when the Muslims assembled in the -mosque to hear the decision of the electoral body, 'Abd ar

Rahman b. 'Awf first offered the caliphate to 'Ali on two conditions: one, that he should rule in accordance with the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet; and two, that he must follow the precedents established by two former caliphs. Accepting the first condition, 'Ali declined to comply with the second, declaring that in all cases in which he found no positive law of the Qur'an or decision of the Prophet, he would only rely on his own judgement. 'Abd ar-Rahman then turned to 'Uthman and put the same conditions before him. 'Uthman readily consented to them, whereupon 'Abd ar-(Rahman declared him caliph.(۱

As will be discussed below, this point was later made the basis of the differences between Sunny and Shi'i legal theory and practice, whereby the Shi'I jurists rejected .the decisions of the first three caliphs

This tradition bears the unanimous testimony of both Sunni and Shi'i historians alike, and therefore its authenticity can hardly be questioned, as has been done by some scholars. If later Sunni

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Baladhuri, V, p.۲۲; Ya'qubi, I, p. ۱۶۲; Tabari, I, p.۲۷۹۳; 'Iqd, IV, p.۲۷۹; Hadid, Sharh, I, -۱ pp. ۱۸۸, ۱۹۴

theologians attempted to ignore it, it was simply because of the fact that the tradition

compromised the newly established concept of the acceptance of the first four caliphs as the Rashidun (rightly guided), and their decisions as precedents for the foundation of the fama'a. Apart from this historical evidence, the most convincing factor in support of the accuracy of this tradition lies in 'Ali's own independent nature and in the .marked individuality of his character

When we try to delineate 'Ali's character from his conversion to Islam at the age of ten or so until his death, the following characteristics emerge. He was uncompromising in his principles, straightforward, and above all too stern in his religious outlook, a factor which may have contributed to the later failure of his own caliphate. These features predominate throughout his career. It is not possible here to go into the details of his biography, but the clearest expressions of his independent attitude are to be found in instances such as when he insisted that hadd (punishment) be carried out on 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar for the murder of Hurmuzan.(۱) On another occasion, when all others refused to administer the flogging punishment on Walid b. 'Uqba, guilty of drunken- ness, 'Ali took this task on himself.(۲) A still stronger manifestation of his rigid adherence to principles was when he issued orders of dismissal to Mu'awiya and other Umayyad governors, though advised by his friends to (first consolidate his strength in the capital.(۳

,As has been discussed above

Baladhuri, V, p.۲۴; Tabari, I, p.۲۷۹۶ -۱

Baladhuri, V, p. ۳۳ ; Mas'udi, Muruj III, p.۲۲۵ -۲

Tabari, I, pp. ۳۰۸۲ ff, ۳۰۸۵; Dinawari, Akhbar, p. ۱۴۲; Mas'udi, Muruj, II, pp.۳۵۳ f.; -۳ Ya'qubi; II, p. ۱۸۰

even during 'Ali's period of general inactivity there were points of serious disagreement between him and the Caliphs Abu Bakr and 'Umar. He was entirely opposed to 'Umar on the question of Diwan, and recommended the distribution of the

entire revenue, holding nothing in reserve, a policy which 'Umar did not accept.(١) Involving, as it did, so many administrative and financial questions, this disagreement can hardly be considered insignificant, and in fact it was only one of several major disputes to which the sources allude. Nasr b. Muzahim al-Minqari (died ٢١٢/٨٢٧), one of the earliest writers of great importance and credibility, preserved for us the revealing .correspondence exchanged between 'Ali and Mu'awiya

Mu'awiya, in his letter to 'Ali, besides accusing him of responsibility for the murder of 'Uthman, which is the main theme of the letter, levelled other charges against him as .well

One of them was that 'Ali tried to rebel against Abu Bakr, delayed in recognizing him as the caliph, did not co-operate with the first two caliphs during their caliphates, and continually disagreed with them.(٢) 'Ali in his reply, while rejecting all other accusations as false, argued that his delay in recognizing Abu Bakr and his resentment towards him was due to the fact that he considered himself better qualified for the leadership of the community on the same grounds as Abu Bakr had put forward against the Ansar. That is, if the Quraysh had better claims as against the ,Ansar because of the former's relationship to the Prophet

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١- See Vaglieri, EI٢ article "'Ali",

٢- Minqari, Waqi'at Siffin p.٨

then the Banu Hashim had the strongest rights, being nearest to the Prophet in (relationship.(١

Abd ar-Rahman knew these differences full well and at the same time he also knew' equally well 'Ali's independent and uncompromising nature. But this time, with the

deaths of the dominating personalities of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah, it was not so easy to set 'Ali aside without serious cause, for his possible rivals (or rival in the person of 'Uthman) were much inferior to him in many ways. The deed was, however, accomplished by involving 'Ali in an elective committee in which he had no chance of gaining solid majority support, and then offering him the caliphate on .terms which would be unacceptable to him

Uthman was a weak man; apart from considerations of family relationships and' personal friendship, this weakness was probably one of the reasons why 'Abd ar-Rahman supported him. Realizing the weakness of his own claims to the office, 'Abd ar-Rahman wanted to establish as caliph a man who would rely on him and serve his interests, which were those of the Quraysh aristocracy and the rich. 'Ali, who belonged to the poor and ascetically minded (zuhhad) class, had little in common with such interests and is reported to have repeatedly denounced worldly comforts by (saying, "O gold and silver, try to tempt someone other than me."(٢

In contrast to this attitude, 'Abd ar-Rahman and other members of the Shura were men of prosperity and wealth, and now with the conquests

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ibid., p.٨٩ -١

Ibn Khaldun, Muqaddima, pp.٥٤٢ f; 'Iqd, IV, p.٣١٣; also see Mas'udi, Muruj, II, pp.٤٢٥ -٢ ff

of the Byzantine and Persian empires, they were avidly seeking the tremendous new opportunities opened up before them. 'Uthman's caliphate provided them with such an opportunity and within a few years they had accumulated enormous wealth and had become the richest people of the community. 'Uthman himself left at his death ١٠٠,٠٠٠ dinars, ١,٠٠٠,٠٠٠ dirhams, and estates worth over ١٠٠,٠٠٠ dinars in addition to herds of horses and camels. Similarly the riches of 'Abd ar-Rahman, Zubayr, Talha and Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas are described as running into millions.(١) Apart from group

politics and party partisanship, it was therefore quite natural for such men to elect .someone representing their own class

The selection of 'Uthman did not pass without serious protest from 'Ali himself and opposition from some of his old and ardent partisans. Keeping in view the long-standing disputes between the Banu Hashim and the Banu Umayya, going back to the days of Hashim b. 'Abd Manaf and his brother 'Abd ash-Shams over the religious and political leadership of the Quraysh, one can well imagine Banu Hashim's feelings now that the new authority stemming from Muhammad, a Hashimite, had been taken over by an Umayyad. T

he speeches made and the harsh words ex- changed between the supporters of 'Ali and those of 'Uthman, following 'Abd ar-Rahman's announcement of the selection of the latter, manifest not only partisanship for one or the other, but the trends of thinking and the fundamental differences in approach. Ibn Abi Sarh, a notorious Umayyad, once condemned

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۱- For the details of each one's wealth, see Ibn Khaldun, loc. cit.; Mas'udi, Muruj, II, p.۳۳۲

to death by the Prophet,(۱) spoke enthusi- astically in support of 'Uthman, with whom he had been suckled by the same wet-nurse, and said to 'Abd ar-Rahman, “If you desire that the Quraysh should not split among themselves, then appoint 'Uthman.” On this 'Ammar b. Yasir, an ardent supporter of 'Ali, rebuking Ibn Abi Sarh and ,referring to his past anti-Islamic career, reproachfully said

“Since when have you become an advisor to the Muslims?”(۲)

A heated exchange of words followed between the Banu Hashim and the Banu

Umayya. Here the statement of 'Ammar is worth noting, when he said, "O people, God has made us most honourable through His Prophet and distinguished us through His religion, but you are turning away from the people of the house (Ahl al-Bayt) of your ".Prophet

In reply to this, someone from the clan of Makhzum, an old rival of the Banu Hashim, retorted, saying: "This is a matter to be settled among the Quraysh themselves ['Ammar was a South Arabian]. Who are you to interfere in our affairs ?"(٣) The protest 'of Miqdad in favour of 'Ali was even stronger than that of 'Ammar. He said: "It is very hard to see how the people are paying their respect to the members of the family (Ahl al-Bayt) of their Prophet after him. It is indeed shocking to see that the Quraysh have ".forsaken and by-passed the man who is the best among them

Then someone asked Miqdad: "Who are these Ahl al-Bayt, and who is that

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١- Baladhuri, V, p. ۴٩; Tabari, I, p.٢٨٧١

٢- Tabari, I, p.٢٧٨۵; 'Iqd, IV, p.٢٧٩

٣- ibid.

man from them?" "Ahl al-Bayt means Banu 'Abd al-Muttalib and the man is 'Ali b. Abu Talib," replied Miqdad.(١) These protests may be taken as some of the documented remnants of much more serious vocal disputes: fragments that survived the dominant trends in the history of this critical period of Islam. What must particularly be noted here is the frequent use of the term Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet in relation to the leadership of the community. Keeping in mind the importance of the noble families and the concept of sacerdotal lineages among some sections of the Arabs, as discussed in Chapter ١, it is easily understandable that some people were shocked to .see the family of the Prophet so deprived after his death

The most significant point in this whole event of the Shura, however, lies in 'Ali's historic refusal to follow the precedents established by the first two caliphs. This intransigent declaration of 'Ali forms the most important and the earliest theoretical point which ultimately gave rise to the later development of two different schools of law under the titles of Shi'i and Sunni, the former including the Ithna 'Ashari, Isma'ili, and Zaydi, the latter including the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali. If ideological differences between the two schools date back to the event of the Saqifa, the differences, in legal matters at least theoretically, must be dated from 'Ali's refusal to .follow the precedents of the first two caliphs

This refusal thus serves as a cornerstone in the

.Tabari, I, pp.٢٧٨۶ f.; 'Iqd, loc. cit -١

development of Shi'i legal thought. An exponent of the history of ideas would tell us that it often takes a considerably long time for a given idea to present itself in a complete form, and as we shall see later, the idea expressed by 'Ali in the Shura took at least fifty years to become manifest in a distinguishable independent form and was .not fully developed until the imamate of Ja'far as-Sadiq

To conclude this phase, we can remark that the selection of 'Uthman was very largely based on economic, social, and tribal considerations, as exemplified by the speeches made on his behalf. On the other hand, the protests against 'Uthman's nomination and in support of 'Ali from men like 'Ammar and Miqdad were very largely based on religious aspirations. The arguments put forward by these supporters of 'Ali, as quoted above, concerning his relationship with the Prophet and his unsurpassed services to Islam, practically echo the statements made in favour of 'Ali's cause at the ,Saqifa over a decade earlier. Despite his passive and withdrawn attitude

.Ali still retained a devoted core of supporters in the Muslim community'

Chapter ۴: The Re-emergence of the 'Alid Party

The sixteen-year period beginning with the caliphate of 'Uthman (۲۴/۶۴۴) and ending with the assassination of 'Ali (۴۱/۶۶۱) represents a marked difference from the preceding period of the caliphate of Abu Bakr and 'Umar in the development of Shi'ism in Islam. It was a turning point in many ways. Firstly, this period created an atmosphere which encouraged Shi'i tendencies to become more

evident and conspicuous. Secondly, the events which took place gave an active and sometimes violent character to the hitherto inactive Shi'i movement. Finally, the circumstances which prevailed involved the Shi'i outlook, for the first time, in a .number of political, geographical, and economic considerations

The period was therefore one in which the desire of the first Shi'is to express their ideas on the succession of 'Ali, the religious zeal of the Companions, personal hatreds, provincial and economic interests, political intrigues, and the discontent of the poor against the rich were fused together. This fusion not only provided a new sphere of activity for the Shi'i movement, but also widened its circle of influence to those who needed an outlet for their political grievances, especially those against Mu'awiya, the representative of the Umayyad aristocracy and Syrian domination. Seeing in 'Ali a champion of the political independence of Iraq, as opposed to this Syrian domination, these groups supported him and were for the time being of the same mind as the

religious supporters of 'Ali, who believed in his right to the caliphate based on the .theocratic principle

The emergence of the political Shi'a is characterized both by the increase in its influence and its numbers and by the sudden rapidity with which it henceforth grew. An examination of the period in which this emergence occurred Will result in a clearer .insight into the split which developed within the main body of Islam

Abu Bakr and 'Umar did not give their respective clansmen any

particular share in the rule of the Muslim community, nor were their clans of much political consequence. Such was not the case with 'Uthman. His clan wanted to regain its past political importance after having taken second place to the Hashimites after the victory of Muhammad. When 'Uthman was elected, the Umayyads regarded this as a triumph for the whole clan, not solely as 'Uthman's personal success.(۱) They considered it natural that the Caliph should give them a share of the profits, and their demands could hardly be refused by the new caliph, who felt that his strength lay in .the support and good will of his powerful clansmen

He did what he could to satisfy their demands, and the people were painfully disillusioned when they found the Caliph committed to the improvement of the lot of his own family and clan rather than to the welfare of the community as a whole. 'Uthman made no secret of bestowing favours on his kinsmen, and justified this action by saying: "The Prophet used to bestow offices on his kinsmen, and I happen to belong to people who are poor. So I let my hands a bit loose in regard to that with (which I have been entrusted by virtue of the care I take of it"(۲

It is an historical fact that within a few years of 'Uthman's accession the Umayyads claimed among themselves the governorships of Kufa, Basra (capital of a vast

territory including Iran and Central Asia and extending to

۱- Aghani VI, pp.۳۳۴ f.; Mas'udi, Muruj, II, pp.۳۴۲ f.

۲- Tabari, I, pp. ۲۹۴۸ f. For other versions, see Ibn Sa'd, III, ۶۴; Baladhuri, V, p.۲۵; Ya'qubi, II, pp.۱۶۴ ff.; Dinawari, Akhbar, p.۱۳۹; Mas'udi, Muruj; II, pp.۳۳۴ ff.; 'Iqd, IV, pp. ۲۸۰ff.

Sind), Syria, and Egypt: all the important provinces of the empire. These Umayyad governors, in turn, relied on the support of their own kinsmen, whom they placated and allowed to dominate the caliphal councils.(۱)

The critical problem here was not so much that the Umayyads dominated all positions of power and advantage, but rather that they were allowed enough latitude to use their powers arbitrarily and unfairly for the benefit of themselves and their kinsmen, thus incurring the dissatisfaction and hatred of many Muslims. 'Abd Allah b. Sa'd b. Abi Sarh, 'Uthman's milk-brother, who administered Egypt, was an extremely unpopular man, whom the Prophet had ordered to be killed during the conquest of Mecca.(۲) Al-Walid b. 'Uqba, 'Uthman's half-brother, was even more intensely hated by the Kufans, whom he treated in brutal fashion.

He divided lands among his favourites and finally disgraced himself by drunkenness.(۳) 'Uthman was obliged to recall him and appointed another close relative, Sa'id b. Al-'As, who infuriated the local notables by his high-handed treatment of them, then alarmed them by declaring that the Sawad of Kufa would become a “Garden of the Quraysh”. Provoked by such abuses, a group of the Qur'an readers in Kufa, such as Malik b. Harith an-Nakha'i, Sulayman b. Surad al-Khuza'i, Hujr b. 'Adi al-Kindi, Shurayh b. 'Awf al-'Absi, and others, protested in vain against Sa'id's behaviour. Instead of making proper inquiries,

'Uthman ordered the agitators to be sent to Syria for Mu'awiya to deal with.(۴)

The names of these distinguished Qur'an readers are

p: ۱۱۰

۱- See Tabari, I, pp.۲۹۳۲۳; Mas'udi, Muruj, II, p.۳۳۷

۲- Tabari, I, p. ۲۸۷۱ ; Baladhuri, V, p.۴۹

۳- Baladhuri, V, pp.۳۱ ff.; Tabari, I, p.۲۸۴۵; Mas'udi, Muruj, II, p.۳۳۵; 'Iqd, IV, p.۳۰۷

۴ - For the Ithna 'Asharites, see Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi and Furu' al-Kafi; for the Isma'ilites, see Qadi Nu'man, Da'a'im al-Islam

to be taken seriously as they afterwards appeared as the leaders of the Shi'i movement in Ku fa. They stood at the forefront of

Ali's army at the battles of Al-Jamal and Siffin, and even after 'Ali's assassination they' never reconciled themselves with Mu'awiya. Similarly, the groups of the Qur'an readers from Egypt and Basra were not less violent in their protests against the free hand given by the Caliph to his Umayyad governors and their highhanded treatment of the people.

This clash with the Qur'an readers set the seal on 'Uthman's unpopularity in religious circles in the provinces. Here we must point out that the word qurra' (Qur'an readers) used by our sources implies those who distinguished themselves and were recognized by the people as learned in religious matters, and who taught the people the Qur'an and religious observances. Naturally they carried great prestige among the masses and were regarded as the intelligentsia of the people.

In addition to appointing many of his clansmen to lucrative posts, 'Uthman made large gifts to others.(۱) At the same time, he treated some of the Companions of the Prophet very harshly. 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud, then in charge of the treasury in Kufa, was recalled after a quarrel with Al-Walid b. 'Uqba, and the Caliph allowed him to be

manhandled in his presence.(۲) Even worse was the treatment received by 'Ammar b. Yasir, who was reviled and beaten into unconsciousness when he arrived from Egypt (with a letter of complaint against Ibn Abi Sarh.(۳

During the

p: ۱۱۱

Baladhuri, V. pp.۲۷ f.; Tabari, I, pp.۲۹۵۳ f.; Ash'ari, Tamhid, p.۹۹ -۱

Baladhuri, V, pp.۳۶ f.; Ya'qubi, II, p.۱۷۰ -۲

Baladhuri, V, pp. ۴۸ f.; 'Iqd, IV, p.۳۰۷. Also see Mowdudi, Abu'lA'la, Khilafai wa - ۳ Mulukiyat, pp.۱۰۵ ff., ۳۲۱ if, which gives an admirable exposition of 'Uthman's .weakness for his kinsmen and of their misdeeds

last few years of 'Uthman's reign, the major part of the population was seething with discontent over the spectacle of Umayyad aristocrats seated in high offices, enjoying wealth and luxury, indulging in debauchery, and lavishly spending the immense wealth which they appropriated to themselves illegitimately. The resulting disequi Librium in the economic and social structure naturally aroused The jealousy of various sections of the population and provided ample combustible material for an explosion. One outspoken leader of the criticism against 'Uthman's regime was Abu Dharr, a fearless and uncompromising partisan of frugality and asceticism who violently protested against the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few and demanded the distribution of lands among the community. 'Uthman, who did not like the idea of Abu Dharr thundering against the wealthy in the mosque of Medina, sent him to Syria. Before long, the Caliph received a letter from Mu'awiya complaining of Abu Dharr's dangerous activities and ordered that Abu Dharr be bound to a wooden camel saddle and be sent back to Medina under escort. He arrived in the city half dead, with the flesh torn off his thighs, and he was shortly thereafter exiled to Ar-Rabdha, where he soon died.(۱) His misadventures were widely related throughout the provinces, awakening an echo of bitterness against 'Uthman and the class of the rich

.concurrently with the propagation of 'Ali's claims to the caliphate

In this connection the speeches of Abu Dharr, frequently delivered in the mosque of .Medina, are of special interest

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۱- Baladhuri, V, pp. ۵۲ ff.; Tabari, I, pp. ۲۸۵۸ ff.; Mas'udi, Muruj, II, pp.۳۳۹ ff.; Ya'qubi, II, p.۱۷۱

:Gathering people around himself, he used to say

"...'Ali is the legatee (wasi) of Muhammad and the inheritor(wraith) of his knowledge. Oh you bewildered and perplexed community after its Prophet, if you give preference [in leadership] to those whom God has given preference, and set aside those whom God has set aside, and if you firmly place the succession and inheritance in the people of the house of your Prophet, you will certainly be prosperous and your means of subsistence will be made ample.(۱)

We must strongly dissent from the viewpoint of such writers as have laboured to present the rebellion against 'Uthman as being due to only the evil machinations of some mischief-mongers, and the grievances they voiced as being all forged and artificial. Such writers ignore the fact that these mischief-mongers-if such they were-had real grievances to protest and the tacit support of the Sahaba to provide the necessary sanction. For discontent to develop into open rebellion, two things are essential: leadership, which must come from those who command respect in society, and the time and opportunity to organize and concert action. Both of these prerequisites were present in the last few years of 'Uthman's caliphate.(۲) The attitude of the Sahaba, prominent among them being 'Ali, Talha, and Zubayr, is quite .clear

There is ample material to prove that almost all of them, and especially these three, were equally loud in their opposition to the ways of 'Uthman. Even 'Abd ar-Rahman b. 'Awf (died

٣٢/٦٥٢), who had played an all-important role in

p: ١١٣

١- Ya'qubi, loc. cit.

٢- For these comments see S. M. Yusuf, “The Revolt Against 'Uthman”, Islamic Culture, XXVI I (١٩٥٣), pp.۴-۵

the election of 'Uthman, is reported to have hinted long before the outbreak of disturbances that he held 'Uthman's actions to be a violation of the pledge given by him at the time of his election.(١) Even if we disagree with the reports that they wrote letters to the provincials or actually incited them in a systematic manner, the fact remains that they made no secret of their views and moral support for the rebels.

'Ali's attitude towards the situation in this period is clearly illustrated by his reaction to the punishment given to Abu Dharr. When 'Uthman ordered the latter to be exiled, he gave strict orders that no one should see him off except Marwan, who was to escort him out of Medina. Despite these orders, 'Ali, accompanied by Hasan, Husayn, and his partisan 'Ammar b. Yasir, went along with Abu Dharr for quite a long distance. When reminded of the Caliph's directive by Marwan, 'Ali replied by cursing him and striking the head of Marwan's beast with his stick. When it was time to part, Abu Dharr wept and said, “By God, whenever I see you, I remember the Prophet.(٢) To console Abu Dharr, 'Ali said to him:

“You were annoyed for the sake of God, so entertain hope from Him for whom you were angry. These people were afraid of you for the sake of their world, and you

feared them for the sake of your religion. So leave in their hands that by reason of which they

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۱- Baladhuri, V, pp. ۲۶, ۵۷; Tabari, I, pp.۲۹۵۵, ۲۹۸۰; 'Iqd, IV, p.۲۸۰

۲- Baladhuri, V, pp. ۵۳ff.; Mas'adi, Muruj, II, pp.۳۴' f.; Ya'qubi, II, pp.۱۷۲ f.; Iladid, Sharh, VIII, pp.۲۵۲ ff.

were afraid of you, and flee away with that by reason of which you feared them; for how badly do they need what you have denied them, and how little do you need what they have denied you. If you had accepted their world they would have loved you; and if you had appropriated to yourself some part of it, they would have felt more secure (in your presence."(۱)

Marwan reported the entire matter to 'Uthman, who became quite indignant at such a breach of orders. When he questioned 'Ali, the latter replied that he was not obliged to obey orders that were not compatible with common sense and justice. "My merits and excellences are far beyond yours; I am far superior to you in every respect.(۲) Later these points were more commonly argued by supporters of 'Ali. The Shi'I poet Sayyid al-Himyari availed himself of these arguments to express his extreme Shi'i views.

After his acceptance of Abu Bakr and the subsequent weakening of his initial party of supporters, 'Ali remained aloof from all government activities until the end of 'Umar's rule, as mentioned above. The protest raised after the selection of 'Uthman demonstrated that 'Ali's candidacy still had many partisans, but these acted only as individuals and did not form any particular group. Once the caliphate of 'Uthman gained widespread acceptance in the community, the spontaneous protests of men such as Al-Miqdad and 'Ammar ceased, though their dissatisfaction remained.

As the Caliph gradually began to lose popularity, the old partisans

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Nahj al-Balagha, I, p.۳۰۳ -۱
Cf. sources in note ۱۴ above -۲

of 'Ali soon revived their grievances and gave full rein to their long- suppressed desires to see 'Ali as caliph. Fresh support rallied to the Hashimite candidate as discontented elements in the empire began to crystallize into factions that needed an effective and acceptable leader. Though Talha and Zubayr had considerable local followings in Kufa and Basra respectively, they were far less important than 'Ali and their support was doomed to remain limited in character. 'Ali found himself surrounded by groups of protesters arriving from the provinces, men who called upon him to support their cause, while at the same time 'Uthman approached 'Ali and appealed to him to mediate with the rebels. Perhaps compelled by the demands of justice, 'Ali had no choice but to stand in Defence of the offended Companions and demand punishment for the blame-worthy. He himself protestedagainst the rich gifts .made by the Caliph to his kinsmen

From this position, he was urged by the qurra' to act as their spokesman, which he did to help meet the just demands of the people on the one hand, and to extricate the Caliph from his difficulties on the other.(۱)

Two groups, different in outlook but with the same goals, were working simultaneously and serving each other's purposes, though not consciously. One group consisted of the

discontented provincial elements discussed above which had been hardest hit by the disequilibrium in the economic structure of the empire, while the other mainly

comprised the loyal partisans of 'Ali. This latter group, led

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Baladhuri; V, pp. ۲۶, ۶۰-۶I; Tabari, I, pp. ۲۹۴۸ f., pp.۲۹۵۵ ff.; Mas'udi, Muruj II, p.۳۴۴; -۱ Ash'ari, Tamhid, p.۵۴

by men like Abu Dharr, Miqdad, 'Ammar, Hudhayfa, and several of the Ansar, enlisted a number of new activist supporters such as Ka'b b. 'Abda an-Nahdi; Malik b. Habib (ath-Tha'labi and Yazid b. Qays al-Arhabi.(۱)

Also included in this circle were the Hashimites as well as 'Ali's clients and servants. Among the latter were Qanbar b. Kadam,(۲) Mitham b. Yahya at-Tammar, and Rushayd al-Hujuri Due to their religious zeal for and devotion to the person of 'Ali as the custodian of Muhammad's message and the true exponent of Islam, these men are symbolic of this stage in the growth of Shi'ism. Both Mitham at-Tammar (۳) and Rushayd al-Hujuri(۴) were crucified in Kufa in ۶۱/۶۸۰ by 'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad because they refused to curse 'Ali and continued their zealous adherence to him and to his .house even after his death

Their hands, legs, and tongues were cut off and their bodies were hanged, a typical example of Ibn Ziyad's brutal behaviour. Besides these supporters, later writers mention the name of 'Abd Allah b. Wahb b. Saba, known as Ibn as-Sawda', as having become a great supporter of 'Ali, travelling from place to place sowing discontent against the rule of 'Uthman.(۵) He is described as a former Jewish rabbi converted to Islam; however, modern Muslim scholars such as 'Ali al-Wardi strongly suggest that 'Abd Allah b. Saba never existed, and that the activities attributed to him were carried out by 'Ammar b. Yasir, whose nickname was also as-Sawda'.(۶) Modern European scholars have also

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Baladhuri, V, p.۴۰ -۱

Kashshi, Rijal, p.۷۲ -۲

ibid., pp. ۷۹-۸۷ -۳

ibid., pp. ۷۵-۷۸ -۴

.Tabari, I, p.۲۹۴۲; Ash'ari, Tamhid, pp.۵۵ f -۵

..Wa' az as-Salat'n (Baghdad, ۱۹۵۴), pp.۱۴۸ ff -۶

expressed their doubts as to the historical personality of Ibn as-Sawda' and tend to (agree that he is a legendary figure.(۱

It is an interesting phenomenon that both the hatred against 'Uthman and the numbers of the supporters of 'Ali grew side by side. The pious opposition to the Umayyad aristocracy became eagerly involved with the partisanship for 'Ali.(۲) In addition to 'Ali's ardent supporters, Talha and Zubayr also conducted propaganda activities against 'Uthman. When Muhammad b. Abi Bakr and Muhammad b. Abi Hudhayfa went to Egypt to rouse the people against the Caliph, they met Muhammad b. Talha, sent there by his father for the same task.(۳) Even the widows of the Prophet opposed the Caliph, and 'A'isha was especially loud in her denunciations of “Na'thal” ((of the big beard and the hairy chest), as she nicknamed him.(۴

The simmering discontent exploded into revolt in ۳۵/۶۵۶, when rebel contingents from Kufa, Basra, and Egypt marched on Medina under the leadership of the qurra'. It is interesting to note that most of the activists leading these contingents happen to have been of Yemeni origin. These were joined by some of the pro-'Alid Medinese Muhajirun and Ansar such as 'Ammar and others. The situation soon became chaotic. The events leading to the murder of 'Uthman are beyond the scope of this study, but it seems fairly certain that his assassination exceeded the desires of even those of .the Sahaba who were openly opposed to the Caliph

Their objectives had been only to depose

1- Bernard Lewis, Origins of Isma'ilism (Cambridge, ١٩۴٠), p.٢۵; Marshal G. S. Hodgson, "How Did the Early Shi'a Become Sectarian ?" JAOS, LXXV (١٩۵۵), p.٢. For further sources, see EI٢ article "Abd Allah b. Saba."

2- Hodgson, "Early Shi'a", p.٣

3- Baladhuri, V, p.۴٩. The son of Abu Bakr, Muhammad was a devoted follower of 'Ali and a bitter critic of'Uthman. Cf. Hodgson, "Early Shi'a", p.٢

4- Baladhuri, V, pp.٣۴, ۴٨-۴٩; Tabari, I, p.٣١١٢; Ya'qubi, II, p.١٧۵; Al-Imama wa's-Siyasa, I, p.٣٠

Uthman, not to kill him. It also seems clear that even during these last tumultuous' days 'Ali continued to play his conciliatory. and mediatory role. He many times did succeed in dispersing the unruly mob that wanted to hurt the Caliph, and during the siege he appointed his sons Hasan and Husayn to stand at the house of 'Uthman and protect him from the angry crowd. They were, however, jostled and pushed aside by the mob, and the Caliph was killed. Hearing the news, 'Ali was the first to reach the scene and was so furious at what had transpired that he slapped the face of Husayn and hit Hasan for failing to save the life of the Caliph.(1)

In the confused atmosphere following the murder of the Caliph, the only candidate for the caliphate that was acceptable to the Muhajirun and the Ansar, as well as to the rebellious qurra', was 'Ali.(2) After three previous but unfulfilled aspirations to gain the office, however, 'Ali was now reluctant to accept the responsibility of leading a community so badly entangled in the question of regicide, and thus to implicate himself in the murder. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih has preserved for us 'Ali's own statement on the situation in the form of an address delivered at the time of the battle of Al-Jamal. In it, 'Ali says:

"After 'Uthman was killed, you came to me saying that you wanted to pay homage to

,me. I said, 'I do not want it.' I pulled back my hand

Baladhuri, V, pp.۶۲ ff., ۶۹; Tabari, I, pp. ۲۹۸۸ f.; Mas'udi, Muruj, II, p.۲۳۲; 'Iqd, IV, p.۲۹۰ -۱

Baladhuri, V, pp.۷۰ f.; Tabari, I, pp.۳۰۶۶ ff.; 'Iqd, IV, pp.۲۹۱, ۳۱۰ -۲

but you stretched it forth. I tried to snatch it [my hand] away from you, but you seized it. You said, 'We will accept no other than you, and we would not have gathered together except around you.' You thronged around me like thirsty camels on their watering day, set loose by their keeper who had unfastened their tethers, until I thought you would kill me [by rushing upon me] or that some one of you would kill the other [by jumping one over the other]. In this way all of you paid me your homage, (and so did Talha and Zubayr."(۱

Pressed by the demands from almost all quarters, 'Ali finally agreed to accept the office, but he specified that he would rule strictly according to the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet and that he would enforce justice and law regardless of any criticism or clash with the interests of any group. Talha and Zubayr, though they both had some followings from Basra and Kufa, realized that they had no chance of mustering enough support to contest 'Ali's candidacy, and they were the first to swear allegiance to him. The Medinese, joined by multitudes of those from the provinces (present in the capital, acclaimed 'Ali as caliph.(۲

Through this election, 'Ali became the first and the only caliph in whose selection a great majority of the community took an active part. He was also the first among the caliphs who, because of the circumstances of his birth, combined in

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Iqd, IV, p.۳۱۸' -۱

Baladhuri, V, p.٧٠; Tabari, I, p.٣٠۶٨; Ya'qubi, II, p. ١٧٨; Ash'ari, Tamhid, p.١٠٧; - ٢ Dinawari, Akhbar, p.١۴٠

.his person both the dynastic and the theocratic principles of succession

From the very start, 'Ali inherited great problems which none of his three predecessors had had to face. Marwan b. al-Hakam, 'Uthman's secretary, along with some other members of the clan of Umayya, managed to escape to Syria to join Mu'awiya, carrying 'Uthman's blood-stained shirt and the severed fingers of Na'ila, the murdered caliph's widow, to use for propaganda purposes. From Syria then came the call for vengeance for 'Uthman's death and a continuous propaganda campaign .against 'Ali

The murder of 'Uthman was not a simple assassination committed by an individual to settle personal grievances, as had been the case in 'Umar's death. 'Uthman's murder was the result of a popular revolt of the poor, discontented, suppressed, and deprived people against the economic, political, and feudalist domination of an old aristocratic family. The more religiously-minded people revolted to safeguard the Islamic ideals of socio-economic justice and equality taught by the Qur'an, enforced by the Prophet, and jealously maintained by Abu Bakr and 'Umar. 'Ali's role as the mediator between the rebel qurra' and the Caliph demonstrates that, on the one hand, he himself was convinced that the resistance movement had been based on just and right demands (and thus asked the Caliph to redress their grievances), while, on the other hand, he had tried his best to save the Caliph from the hands of the unruly mob. Tempers had flared beyond anyone's control, however, and the Caliph was killed by extremists

who escaped in the midst of the utter confusion that followed. 'Ali found himself in a hopeless situation. The actual murderers had fled, and it was impossible for him to

locate them for punishment; yet the fact remained that many of the qurra' around 'Ali had been nearly as responsible for the tragedy as the murderers themselves. 'Ali :himself repeatedly declared that

the murder of 'Uthman was an act of the days of ignorance [al-Jahiliya: the..." common term for the pre-Islamic period in Arabia] I am not indifferent to the demand [of 'Uthman's blood], but at present [the murderers] are beyond my power. As soon as (I get hold of them, I will not hesitate to punish them.(١)

Even Talha and Zubayr agreed on this point and said "the insolent and imprudent people overcame the gentle and sober ones and killed ['Uthman]."(٢) In vain, however, did 'Ali try to find a peaceful solution to the problem. The paradoxical position of deploring the murder of 'Uthman while supporting the justified demands of the qurra', and cursing the murderers of the Caliph while surrounding himself with their associates, would have been a serious challenge to even the shrewdest and most cunning politician, and this was even more so in the case of 'Ali, whose rigid adherence to principles so often prevented him from adopting a practical political policy. Before long, it became obvious that 'Ali's attempts to resolve the crisis by peaceful means had failed. Challenges to his authority included even 'A'isha, who refused

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Tabari, I, p.٣٠٨٠ -١

Tabari, I, p.٣١٢٧ -٢

to return to Medina from the 'Umra (lesser pilgrimage) and turned back to Mecca .when informed of the nomination of 'Ali

Some time later, Talha and Zubayr saw an opportunity to dissociate themselves from

'Ali, and asked permission to perform the 'Umra. Though aware of their plans, 'Ali granted their request. The two joined 'A'isha in the Holy City and then announced that they had been compelled to swear allegiance to 'Ali under duress.(۱) Though both men were ambitious for the caliphate, neither of them had been a real leader of the masses with great popular support at his command; they could never have concerted their efforts had it not been for 'A'isha, who now shifted from the position of an extreme critic of 'Uthman to assume the role of his avenger. By marching to Basra in ۳۶/۶۵۶, the triumvirate threatened to cut 'Ali off from the east and compound the problem of a rebellious Syria by creating a similar problem in Iraq. After much hesitation, 'Ali finally marched to Kufa, where he succeeded in gathering a force strong enough to defeat 'A'isha and her associates in the battle of Al-Jamal. Talha and Zubayr were slain, and 'A'isha was taken prisoner and sent safely back to Medina.

Having secured his position in Iraq for the moment, 'Ali then turned to deal with the much more dangerous problem of Mu'awiya, who, as 'Uthman's kinsman, called for vengeance,(۲) a protest which 'Ali rejected on the grounds that the sons of 'Uthman were more

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۱- Tabari, I, pp. ۳۰۹ I, ۳۱۱۲ if.; Ya'qubi, II, p. ۱۸۰; Hadid, Sharh, I, p.۲۳۲

۲- Tabari, I, p.۳۲۵۵

entitled to this right.(۱) Mu'awiya realized that if 'Ali managed to consolidate his authority he would dislodge the former from his position as governor of Syria. The only way to avoid this was to question the validity of 'Ali's title to the caliphate; given the circumstances in which the new caliph had been installed in office, this was not difficult. 'Ali's supporters, especially the qurra', were vigorously opposed to any compromise with Mu'awiya, and Malik al-Ashtar advised the Caliph not to enter into correspondence with the governor of Syria. Nevertheless, 'Ali tried peaceful means in dealing with his adversary; only when this failed and it became obvious that Mu'awiya

.had resolved to fight did 'Ali march with his forces to meet the Syrians

The conflict of Siffin and the resulting arbitration have been thoroughly and critically studied by a number of scholars, and it is not our purpose here to re-cover well trodden ground. It will suffice to note that 'Ali's position rapidly became critical as the emergence of the Kharijites and the arbitration of Adhruh steadily eroded his strength. While he was preparing for a final struggle against Syria, a Kharijite fanatic, 'Abd ar-Rahman b. al-Muljam, struck him with a poisoned sword in the mosque of .Kufa. The fourth caliph died on ٢١ Ramadan ٤٠/٢٥ January ٦٦١

This entire period is discussed by 'Ali in the last part of his speech of Shaqshiqiyya, and :his own comments are useful in examining this confused era

[In the end, the third of them ['Uthman"

Iqd, IV, p.٣٣٤. Also see Baladhuri, IVA, p. ١٠٨, where some companions rejected' -١ Mu'awiya's right to call for the blood of 'Uthman while there were other nearer .relatives of 'Uthman to claim it

stood up shrugging his shoulders arrogantly; and there stood with him the sons of his father, eating up the property of God as the camels eat up the springtide verdure, .until what he had twisted became untwisted

His destruction was complete, and his greediness made him fall to the ground. Then all of a sudden I was frightened to see a crowd of people around myself, thick as the hyena's mane, thronging towards me from every direction until [my sons] Hasan and Husayn were mobbed and my two sides were split, gathering around me like a herd of

.goats

But when I took up the government, one group broke its pledge, another rebelled,“ and some others transgressed, as if they had not heard the words of God, who says: 'That is the abode hereafter which we allot to those who do not seek greatness and corruption on the earth, and the end is for those who fear.' (XXVIII, ۸۳) Nay, by God, they have heard these words arid comprehend them, but the world is sweet in their .eyes and they are pleased by its gaudiness

Nay, by Him who has split the seed and created the soul, but for the presence of“ those who are present and the establishment of the arguments by the existence of the helpers, as also the fact that God has disliked for the knowing ones to watch idly the fullness of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed, I would have thrown back its [the caliphate's] rope

p: ۱۲۵

on its shoulder and made its last drink from the cup of the first one, and you would have found that your world is as distasteful to me as the dripping from the nose of a (goat.”(۱

With this brief summary as a foundation, we will attempt to analyse the causes and consequences of the major events of 'Ali's short-lived caliphate. It must be remembered that his succession was greatly resisted by some of the Companions of the Prophet and resulted in the first civil war in Islam; but at the same time, his so-called “failures” proved to be epoch- making in the history of the development of Shi'ism. The bitterness of the supporters of 'Ali created by his defeats and disappointments provided an historical foundation for the development of their sectarian tendencies, and the destruction done to him gave the later Shi'a enough

.material for the formation of their own discipline within the body of Islam

An attempt to grasp the situation as a coherent whole reveals the fact that the selection of CAlI was at once a triumph for a particular view of succession hitherto frustrated, and a great shock to all those who had successfully adopted a principle of leadership devoid of notions of primacy based on hereditary sanctity after the death of the Prophet. With the succession of CAl!, these two rival views came into genuine .conflict for the first time and crystallized into definite forms

The former view, soon defeated again, was to find expression in a separatist

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See Chapter ۳, n. ۸, above -۱

tendency towards a, so to speak, sectarian organization; the latter re-emerged victoriously and more vigorously, and eventually shaped itself in such a way as to .become the centre of the Islamic Umma, or Jama'a

Ya'qubi records for us those speeches with which 'Ali was hailed by his enthusiastic supporters, mostly from the Ansar, on the occasion of his installation, and which illustrate those tendencies and sentiments with which he was viewed by this group. For example, Malik b. al-Harith al-Ashtar pledged his allegiance with the declaration that 'Ali was the wasi al-awsiya', the legatee from among the legatees [of the prophets), and the warith ilm al-anbiya', heir to the knowledge of the prophets.(۱) Hodgson doubts whether these terms were really used in reference to 'Ali at such an early date.(۲) In the first place, we must bear in mind that MAlik b. al-Ashtar was of Yemenite origin. South Arabia was a land of ancient civilization where for a thousand years kings had succeeded one another according to a dynastic principle and had been regarded as having extraordinary qualities. Even if the seventh-century Arabs

had no personal experience of kingship, they must have been unconsciously influenced by this continuing tradition.(٣) In this case, the use of terms like wasi and warith by a man of Yemenite origin occurs as a natural and spontaneous corollary of a .deep-seated cultural tradition

In the second place, there are numerous references in contemporary writings which :reflect the same spirit. In praise of 'Ali, Abu'l-Aswad ad-Du'ali sings

Thou art'

p: ١٢٧

Ya'qu hi, II, p.١٧٩ -١

Hodgson, "How Did the Early Shi'a Become Sectarian?", JAOS, p.٢ -٢

W. Montgomery Watt, "Shi'ism Under the Umayyads", JRAS, ١٩۶٥, p. ١۶١. Cf. ٣. - ٣ .Ryckmans, L'institution monarchique en Arabia atant l'Islam (Louvain, ١٩٥١), pp.٢٢٩ if

the noblest of the Quraysh in merit and religion. I see God arid the ftiture state (through my love for 'Ali. 'Ali is the Aaron, 'Ali is the wasi."(١

Still more informative is the fact that the term wanth appears frequently in the Qur an, especially in connection with the family of 'Imran and Isma'il, and Muhammad uses it as a proof in his efforts to attract the "peoples of the book".(٢) It is thus very likely that some of the partisans of 'Ali could have used the same terminology to .express their views

Moreover, in reading the accounts of the battles of Al-Jamal and Siffin, one encounters a great bulk of war poetry exchanged between combatants of both sides

in which wasi and such expressions are repeated by the partisans of 'Ali. Extensive quotations here would be cumbersome, and it will suffice to refer the reader to Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, who collected the verses describing 'Ali as the wasi(۳) from the Kit۴b al-Jamal of Abu Mikhnaf(۴) (died i۵۷/۷۷۴). Another very early work wherein these verses are abundantly quoted is the Kitab Waq'at Siffin by Nasr b. Muzahim (died ۲۱۲/۸۲۷), who also frequently quotes Abu Mikhnaf in addition to other early sources.(۵)

Apart from these considerations, we have already seen that there had been a devoted party which from the very beginning had expressed personal enthusiasm for 'Ali largely based on religious considerations. That this group should express its allegiance in appropriately religious terms is only to be expected. Later generations of Shl'l poets,

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۱ - Mubarrad, Kamil, III, p. ۲۰۵; Mas'udi; Muruj, II, p.۴۱۶; Aghani; XII, p.۳۲۶. R. Strothmann agrees that there are distinguishable religious honours accorded to 'Ali in the poetry of ad-Du'ali (cf. E۱۱ article "Shl'a"). Also see similar verses composed by Kumayt and Kuthayyir in Mubarrad, Kamil, III, pp.۲۰۴ f.

۲ - e.g. Qur'an, xIx, ۶

۳ - Hadid, Sharh, I, pp.۱۴۴-۹

۴ - Ibn Nadim, Fihrist, p.۹۳

۵ - e.g. pp. ۱۸,۲۳ f., ۴۳,۴۹, ۳۶۵, ۳۸۲, ۳۸۵. See also Askafi, Naqdal- 'Uthmaniya, p.۸۴

best represented by Kumayl, Kuthayyir, Sayyid al-IIimyarl, and Farazdaq, frequently used the terms wasi and the like in reference to 'Ali, especially when describing the battles of Al-Jamal and siflln.

The purpose of the preceding discussion has been to demonstrate that there was a party who viewed 'All's accession to the caliphate from an angle quite different from

the viewpoint of the rest of the community. Ilis rise to power was a great victory for his party, which held a particular conception regarding the leadership of the community, and thus it raised questions that had not arisen under the three previous caliphs, therefore causing him to face serious opposition from various quarters .almost right from the start

The initial resistance came from 'A'isha, Talha and Zubayr, who raised the call for vengeance and offered themselves as the agents for exacting satisfaction for the .murder of 'Uthman

But the question to be raised here is whether this was really the reason for their revolt. How could 'Ali alone be held responsible for the killing when Talha and Zubayr themselves had been equally active in supporting the grievances of the people? Was 'A'isha not an equal participant in arousing people against 'Uthman?(۱) For the highly emotional and violent atmosphere in Medina at that time, we can do no more and no less than hold all the dissident groups and critics of the Caliph about equally ,responsible. In one of his speeches

:Ali questions these pretenders, saying'

By God, they have shown their dislike against me for anything“

Baladhuri, V, p. ۳۴. Even the verses of Ibn Umm Kilb attribute to 'A 'isha the - ۱ responsibility for the murder of 'Uthman. Cf. Tabari, I, p ۳۱۱۲

unpleasant and have not appointed an arbitrator between me and themselves; yet they are demanding a right which they had themselves given up and revenge for a blood for which they themselves are responsible. Even if I had a share in it with them, they would still have a share of it; but if they were held responsible for it without me, the blame lies only with them: thus their strongest argument goes only against them.

They are still suckling a mother who has already weaned them, and they are reviving an innovation which had been made to die."(1)

In the final analysis, it would appear that the vengeance for Uthman was made an easy pretext both by the triumvirate and later by Mu'awiya for efforts to check the obvious danger of the rule of the ascetic group in Islam, supported by the lower classes of society and by some of the Ansar of Medina, of whom 'Ali happened to be the representative. The emergence of these groups was a real threat to the old Meccan aristocracy, which had been suppressed by Muhammad's victory and his concept of society and had been kept under strict control by Abti Bakr and 'Umar. When 'Uthman, a member of the wealthiest clan of Umayya, came to power, the old aristocratic ideals of his clan and other ruling families of Mecca found an opportunity to re-establish their power and aristocracy. Ironically enough, the impetus given to the ideas of unity and organization by Islam were

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١- Mufid, Irshad, p.١۴۶; Nahj al-Balagha, I, p.۶٣

brought to the service of this group to revitalize itself and re-emerge in power.

The revolt of the triumvirate represents Talha and Zubayr's last struggle to protect their interests. 'A'isha served as a symbol behind which they could unify their forces, and it certainly was not difficult to involve her in an attack on 'Ali. Her dislike for him is said to have been based on several factors, one of which was 'Ali's advice to Muhammad that he inquire with 'A 'isha's slave girl concerning an incident wherein 'A'isha's late return after having been left behind on a journey caused people to start talking maliciously about her.(1) 'A'isha's quarrels with Fatima and 'Ali's questioning of the election of Abti Bakr, 'A'isha's father, also contributed to the hostility.(2) It is therefore clear that in the battle of Al-Jamal the triumvirate was fighting for personal reasons rather than for the blood of 'Uthman, which was only a convenient pretext.

Though they failed in their objectives, they made the task of Mu'awiya, the unseating of 'Ali and the reassertion of the ideals threatened by his succession, much easier. The fact that the claim of Mu'awiya for the blood of 'Uthman was only an excuse to enable him to remove 'Ali from power is further evident from a conversation between 'Amr b. :al-'As and 'A'isha soon after the battle of Al-Jamal. 'Amr said to 'A'isha

I wish you could have been killed on the day of Jamal, and thereby you would have" entered Paradise and

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This incident is known as the Hadith al-Ifk, and Bukhari records a detailed account -١ ."of it (See Sahih, III, pp. ٢٥ ff). Cf. other hadith works under the heading "Hadith al-Ifk

Umar Abu Nasr, 'Ali wa 'A'isha (Baghdad, n.d.), pp.٢٥ ff' -٢

we would have used your death as our strongest means for reviling and defaming

AII."(١) The conflict at the battle of Al-Jamal brought about a serious split in the' Muslim community. All of our sources reporting on these events use a number of particular designations to express the position adopted henceforth by different .groups

These designations are important in that they indicate how the religious outlook, personal loyalties, regional interests, and politico-economic considerations became involved with one another. Those who supported 'Ali at the battle of AI-Jamal and later at Siffin were at first called the "people of Iraq" (ahl al-'Iraq) as well as the "party of 'AIr' (shi'at 'Ali or al-'Alawiya). Their opponents were called shi'at 'Uthman, or more commonly al-'Uthmanyya. They included the faction of 'A'isha, Talha, and Zubayr (called the "people of the camel," or ashab al-jamal) and the Syrians (ahi ash-Sham), .who were also known as the shi'at Mu'awiya

According to the tendency of the epoch, their positions were also described in more

religiously oriented terms through the use of the word din, which was used in reference to both 'Ali and 'Uthman in expressions such as din 'Ali and din 'Uthman. Another way of expressing this was to assert that one held the 'Alawi or 'Uthmani opinion, ra'y al-'Alawiya or ra'y al-'Uthmaniya.(٢) However, besides these general terms used to describe opposing factions, the more precise titles of Shi'at Ahl al-Bayt and Shi'at Al Muhammad were frequently used from this time onwards by the religiously enthusiastic followers of

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Mubarrad, Kamil, I, p.٢۶٧ -١

These expressions are frequently used in the Arabic sources: e.g. Tabari I, pp.٣١٩۶, -٢ ٣١٩٩; Ya'qubI, II, pp.١٨٣, ١٨٣ ١٩٩; Aghanz; XII, p.٣٣۴; XIV, p.٢١٩

.Ali'

Occasionally the nickname at- Turab:ya was also used. This title was derived from 'Ali's kunya Abn Turab, Father of Dust, given to him by Muhammad. (١) More revealing is the fact that 'Ali himself called his opponents by names which indicated their being misled from the true religious path. Those who fought against him at AI-Jamal he ."referred to as An-Nakithun, "those who break their allegiance

:This is a derivation from the Qur'anic verse which says

Then anyone who violates his oath (nakatha) does so to the harm of his soul."(٢) 'Ali" named his opponents at Siffin Al-Qasitun, "those who act wrongfully", taken from the Qur'anic verse which reads: "Those who swerve (al-qasitun) are fuel for Hell-fire."(٣) Lastly, referring to a tradition of the Prophet, 'Ali referred to the Kharijites of Nahrawan as al-Manqun, "those who missed the truth of religion".(۴) Obviously these .names became common among 'All's followers to describe their opponents

Throughout this period, however, the followers of 'Ali were developing a continuously

broadening base of support. Until the battle of Al-Jamal, the Shi'at 'Ali consisted only of a small personal following who from the very beginning regarded him as the most worthy person for the office of the caliphate to lead the community after the death of the Prophet. After the battle of Al-Jamal the term Shi'at 'Ali came to include all those who had supported 'Ali against 'A'isha, and from this point onwards the original Shi'a group was confusingly included with other groups and individuals who supported 'Ali for

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Tabari, I, p.۱۲۷۲ -۱

XLVIII, ۱۰. See Iladid, Sharh, I, p.۲۰۱ -۲

.LXXII, ۱۵. See Iladid, loc. cit -۳

Hadid, loc. cit.; Ya'qubi, II, p.۱۹۳ -۴

other than religious reasons. It was in this wider sense that the term Shi'a was used in (the document of arbitration at Siffin.(۱)

A few decades later, when the Shi'a started to formulate their official position, some attempts were made to sort out the various groups of 'Ali's supporters which had been so confusingly mixed up at that earlier stage. The ranks of the Shi'a were divided into four categories: Al-Asfiya, the "sincere friends"; Al-Awliya, the "devoted friends"; Al-Ashab, the "companions"; and the Shurtat al-Khamis, the "picked division".(۲) To whom the first three terms refer is not quite clear, though various Shi'i sources indicate the group of earlier followers-Miqdad, Salman, 'Ammar, Hudhayfa, Abu .Hamza, Abu Sasan, and Shutayr-as belonging to the Asftya

The idea of these classes is certainly of a later date. Nevertheless, we must make some distinction between those followers of 'Ali who emphasized the religious factor of his succession as the wasi and those who supported his cause mainly on political grounds, especially after he made Kufa his capital. In addition to a large political following, 'Ali left behind him a zealous personal party which had sworn to him that

they would be "friends to those whom he befriended, and enemies of those to whom he was hostile."(٣) Insisting that 'Ali was in accordance with truth and guidance" ('ala'l-haqq wa'l- huda) and his opponents consequently in error, they maintaned that 'Ali, by the circumstances of his birth, was specially qualified to bear supreme authority in the community. The

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١- Minqari; Waq'at Siffin, p.۵٠۴; Tabari, I, pp.٣٣٣۶ f.

٢- Fihrist, p.١٧۵; Tabari, II, p. ١; Kashshi, Rijal, pp.۴ f.

٣- Tabari, I,pp.٣٣۵٠ f. Cf. W. Montgomery Watt, "Shi'ism Under the Umayyads", JRAS (١٩۶٠), pp. I۶٠-١۶١

existence of this devoted band of religious supporters largely explains how Shiism managed to survive the multitude of decisive political defeats inflicted on the movement over the years.

Chapter ۵: Kufa, Stage of Shi'i Activities

From the time 'Ali moved to Kufa in ٣۶/۶۵۶, or even earlier, the city became the main centre of Shi'i movements, aspirations, hopes, and sometimes concerted efforts. It was in and around Kufa that so many of the stormy events which make up the early history of Shi'i Islam took place: events such as the mobilization of forces by 'Ali for the battles of Al-Jamal and Siffin the election and abdication of Hasan, the uprising of Hujr b. 'Adi al-Kindi, the massacre of Husayn and his companions, the movement of the Tawwabun, and the revolt of Mukhtar. Yet Kufa also proved to be a source of setbacks, disappointments, frustrations, and even treachery and failure in the Shi'i

desire to see the house of 'Ali in command of the affairs of the Muslim community. This chapter, therefore, endeavours to examine in brief the nature and composition .of the city of Kufa and the characteristic tendencies of its people

The city of Kufa was founded in the year ١٧/۶٣٨, about three years after 'Umar b. al-Khattab assumed the caliphate at Medina.(١) After the Muslim victories at the battles of Al-Qadisiya in ١۵/۶٣۶ and that of Jalula' in the following year, the Caliph ordered Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas, the commander of the Muslim armies in Iraq, to remain where he was, no doubt with

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Baladhuri, Futuh al-Buldan, trans. Philip K. Hitti, The Origins Have the Islamic State -١ (Beirut, ١٩۶۶), p.۴٣۴; Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan (Tehran, ١٩۶۵), IV, p.٣٢٣; Tabari; I, p.٢۴٨۵; Khalifa b. Khaybar, Ta'rikh, ed. Zakkar (Cairo, ١٩۶٧), I, p.١٢٩

the idea of consolidating Muslim control of Iraq and then making further advances into Persia whenever this might prove advisable. Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas therefore stationed the Arab armies at the newly conquered Sassanian capital of Al-Mada'in, which soon proved to be unsatisfactory to the Arabs because of its damp climate, crowded living conditions, and the lack of a desert environment providing pure air and .open pastures for grazing cattle

Informed of the hardships the Arab troops were experiencing in a strange environment, the Caliph wrote to Sa'd to remove the armies from Al-Mada'in and find a place which would suit the Arab way of life and meet their requirements. After two or three places had been tried, and with the help of Salman al-Farisi and Hudhayfa b. al-Yaman, the choice fell on a plain lying on the west bank of the Euphrates close to the old Persian city of Al-Hira.(١) Subsequently Sa'd ordered his forces to encamp there and make it their home. This was the beginning of Kufa. The choice of the place for the envisaged city was not a hasty one, but was made after careful consideration (and a thorough search of the area lasting almost two years.(٢

The description of the founding (Khitat) of Kufa given by the sources leaves us in no doubt that at first it was not meant so much to develop a township as to establish a strong, permanent, and strategically located garrison for the Arab armies in the newly conquered distant territory of

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See sources cited in note ۱ above -۱

Muhammad Husayn al-Zubaydi, Al-Hayat al-ijtima'iya wa'l iqtisadiya fi'l Kufa (Cairo, -۲ ۱۹۷۰), p.۲۵; Yusuf Khalif, Hayat al-Shi'r fi'l-Kufa (Cairo, ۱۹۶۸), p.۲۳

Iraq. This is clear from 'Umar's directive when he wrote to Sa'd "Choose for the Muslims a place for migration (dar hijra) and a centre [for carrying out] war (manzil jihad)."(۱) By dar hijra at this particular time, 'Umar meant a permanent home for those of the fighters of Al-Qadisiya who came for the conquest of Iraq from far-off places and who were supposed to stay there to maintain Muslim control over the new territory; by manzil jihad he most probably indicated that these settlers would be .expected to undertake further military actions into Persia

Baladhuri gives a slightly different version of 'Umar's directive in which besides "a place to which Muslims could migrate" he adds the phrase "and which the Muslims could use as a meeting place (qayrawan)."(۲) This again means that in 'Umar's mind Kufa was meant as a garrison town where different contingents from distant places could stay and should be readily available whenever required. The first settlers in this garrison town were, therefore, those hurriedly collected contingents who fought at .the battle of Al-Qadisiya and were known as ahl al-ayyam wa'l-Qadisiya

The planning of the new city and the organization of the quarters for the first

inhabitants, especially when they were drawn from such a great variety of tribes, as .will be seen presently, must have been a great task for Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas

Except for Basra, which had been founded only a year earlier and was still in the formative stages, the Arabs of northern and central

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Tabari, I, p.۲۳۶۰; Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan, IV, p.۳۲۲ -۱

Baladhuri, Origins, p.۴۳۴ -۲

Arabia had little experience in establishing townships. The conception of a town as a political or social unit was still something foreign to the Arab sense of belonging. Even in old cities in northern and central Arabia such as Ta'if, Mecca, and Medina, socio-.political units were not the cities, but the tribes

With the beginning of 'Umar's caliphate and the thrust of outward expansion, those Arabs who seized the first opportunity to fight, and accordingly migrated to Syria, were organized in relatively cohesive groupings since they belonged to large and homogeneous tribes. Similarly, in the Basran territories there were mainly two predominant tribes, Tamim and Bakr, and only a negligible number of ۳۰۰ other people (who came from distant areas.(۱

At Kufa, on the other hand, the number of those who came to live from far-off places ranged between ۱۵,۰۰۰ and ۲۰,۰۰۰, and were exceedingly heterogeneous in tribal .composition

There was a marked absence of large dominating clans or groups of clans. At first,

Sa'd found the solution in dividing them not into individual clans or tribes, but into their broader tribal categories of Nizari (North Arabs) and Yemeni (South Arabs). The Nizaris were therefore quartered on the western side of the plain, and the Yemenis on the eastern side, according to the lots drawn with arrows, as was the custom of the Arabs.(۲) The large plot of land which he demarcated for the mosque was to be the centre of the city. Adjoining the mosque the governor's residence and the treasury were

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۱ - M. Hind, "Kufan Political Alignments in the Mid-۷th Century AD", International Journal of Middle East Studies, (October, ۱۹۷۱), p.۳۵۱

۲ - Baladhuri, Origins, pp.۴۳۵ f.; Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan, IV, p.۳۲۳

.built

This first arrangement of the population of Kufa, however, had to go through three .successive reorganizations in the following ۳۳ years

The organization of the Kufan population into the two broad groupings of the Nizaris and the Yemenis soon proved to be unsatisfactory. Firstly, neither the various tribes of the Nizaris nor the different groups of the Yemenis found it a congenial to put up together and soon encountered serious problems. Secondly, such an arrangement presented serious difficulties in forming compact military contingents. Kufa was founded as a garrison town intended to furnish well-organized contingents ready for .action

This was difficult when people were grouped into two broad divisions. Finally, the lack of small groupings into clans or groups of allied clans made it difficult to organize the distribution of stipends on which the population depended. Experiencing these

difficulties Sa'd, after consulting the Caliph 'Umar, reorganized the population into seven groups. This reshuffling or balancing out, 'addala, ta'dil, was made on the basis of genealogies and alliances with the assistance of two recognized experts in Arab genealogies (nussab).(۱) The guiding principle employed in the reorganization was clearly the pre-Islamic or traditional Arabian pattern of tribal organization in which .tribes or clans of tribes made political alliances in the form of loose confederacies

The entire population of Kufa was thus divided into seven groups, described as asba', (in the following units:(۲

۱ Kinana with their allies from the ahabish and others and theclan of Jadila. Kinana was a Meccan tribe and Quraysh was one

p: ۱۳۹

۱- Tabari, I, p.۲۴۹۵

۲- .ibid

of its branches, whereas Jadila, a branch of Qays 'Aylan, was also from the Hijaz and had some connections with Kinana. Both of them were regarded as people of prestige (ahl al-'aliya). Kinana and Quraysh, along with some other tribes, had in the past formed a group known as Khindif. It was natural that in Kufa both Kinana and Jadila should enjoy a close relationship and collaborate with the Qurayshi governors and, (even though small in number, maintain a privileged position.(۱

۲ Quda'a, Ghassan, Bajila, Khath'am, Kinda, Hadramawt, and Azd,(۲) combined together, formed a strong Yemeni contingent. Two of them, the Bajila, led by their chief Jarir b. 'Abd

Allah,(۳) who was a personal friend of the Caliph 'Umar, and Kinda, whose leader was .Ash'ath b. Qays,(۴) had dominating positions in this group

Madhhij,(۵) Himyar,(۶) Hamdan,(۷) and their allies. This was another powerful ۳
Yemeni group, in which the Hamdan attained a significant position in Kufa and played (an important role and produced some staunch supporters of the Shi'i cause.(۸

(Tamim, Rihab, and Hawazin, all three belonging to the Mudar group.(۹ ۴

Asad, Ghatfan, Muharib, Nimr, Dubay'a, and Taghub,(۱۰) most of these belonging to ۵
.the Nizari group from Rabi'a and Bakr

Iyad, 'Akk, 'Abd al-Qays, Ahl al-H ajar, and Hamra'. Iyad (۱۱) and 'Akk,(۱۲) of Nizari ۶
'Adnani origin, had long been resident in the Iraqi region and had joined the Muslim forces against the Sassanian armies. 'Abd al-Qays,(۱۳) also an 'Adnani branch had .migrated to Bahrayn and was known as Ahl al-H ajar

They sent a

For Kinana see 'Umar Rida Kahhala, Mu'jam Qaba'il al-'Arab (Damascus, ۱۹۴۹), - ۱
p.۹۹۶; 'Iqd, III, pp.۳۳۹, ۳۵۹; for Jadlia of Qays 'Aylan see Kahhala, p.۱۷۳; 'Iqd, III, p.۳۵۰

For the details of these Yemeni tribes, see Kahalla, pp.۹۵۷, ۸۴۴ f., ۶۳ ff, ۱۳۱ f., ۹۹۸ ff, - ۲
۲۸۲, ۱۵ ff respectively; 'Iqd, III, pp.۳۷۱, ۳۸۲, ۳۸۸, ۳۹۱ f., ۴۰۳, ۳۷۵, ۳۸۵ respectively

Kahhala, p.۶۴; 'Iqd, III, p.۳۸۸ -۳

He led the delegation of Kinda to Medina in ۹/۶۳۰ to accept Islam. See Kahhala, p.۹۹۹ -۴

From Madhhij there were many important sub-tribes, such as Nakhkha' and Tayy. -۵

See Kahhala; p. ۱۰۶۲; 'Iqd, III, p.۳۹۳

Kahhala, pp.۳۰۵ f.; 'Iqd, III, p.۳۶۹ -۶

.Kahhala, p.۱۲۲۵; 'Iqd, III, pp.۳۸۹ f -۷

Kahhala, p.۱۲۲۵; 'Iqd, III, p.۳۸۹ -۸

.Kahhala, pp. ۱۲۶ ff., ۳۱۵, ۱۲۳۱ respectively; 'Iqd, III, pp.۳۴۴ ff, ۳۴۳ f., ۳۵۳ ff -۹

Kahhala, pp.۲۱ ff., ۸۸۸, ۱۰۴۲, ۱۱۹۲, ۶۶۴ ۱۲۰ ff. respectively; 'Iqd, III, pp.۳۴۰ ff., ۳۵', ۳۱۹, -۱۰ ۳۵۸, ۳۵۶, ۳۵۹

Kahhala, pp.۵۲ ff -۱۱

Of uncertain origin. Some said they belonged to the Qahtanis, others describe - ۱۲ .them as 'Adnanis from al-Dayth b. 'Adnan. .See Kahhala, pp.۸۰۲ f

Kahhala, pp.۷۲۶ f.; 'Iqd, III, p.۳۵۷ -۱۳

large delegation from Bahrayn to Medina in the year ۹/۶۳۰ and accepted Islam, many of them distinguishing themselves as Companions of the Prophet.(۱) Though composed of a hodge-podge of Arab tribes, their importance can hardly be underestimated, as the 'Abd al-Qays came to Al-Qadisiya under a powerful Tamimi chief, Zuhra b. Hawiya, one of the chief architects of the Muslim victory at Al-Qadisiya, who solidly united these three tribes under his command to inflict heavy losses on the Persians. Soon after Al-Qadisiya, the strength of this group was immensely increased when ۴,۰۰۰ Persian slaves under their leader Daylam (hence the name Daylamites) accepted Islam on special terms secured from Sa'd, and joined this Tamimi dynastic chief, who became their patron. They were thus united in a confederacy with the Iyad, 'Akk, and the 'Abd al-Qays. The name Hamra' in this group refers to these ۴,۰۰۰ (Persians.(۲

This group, however, at least numerically, formed one of the strongest units at Kufa, and consequently their numerically advantageous position was bound to come into direct conflict, in the not too distant future, with the interests and superior claims of the tribes of high social standing in the Kufan socio-political complex. Elements of this group, especially the 'Abd al-Qays, are particularly noted by the sources for their (strong support for 'Ali at both AI-Jamal and Siffin.(۳

The seventh group, Sub', not specifically named by Tabari, is certainly the Tayy, a ۷ powerful tribe of Yemen. The fact that it must have been the Tayy

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۱- Kahha۱a, p.۷۲۶

۲- Baladhuri, Origins, pp.۴۴۰ f.; El۲ article "Daylam"

۳- Kahhala, p.۷۲۶

is evident from numerous references to it spread over hundreds of pages which Tabari devotes to the events in Kufa until the time of Mu'awiya. The Tayy converted to Islam in ۹/۶۳۰, and when in ۱۱/۶۳۲ all other distant tribes apostatized, the Tayy remained steadfast in Islam. They joined Muthanna b. al-Haritha in the wars of Iraq at the conquest of Al-Hira, and then took part in the battle of Al-Qadisiya. We then hear of Tayy as one of the strongest supporters of 'Ali at Al-Jamal and Siffin.(۱)

Again we come across 'Adi b. Hatim, the chief of Tayy, among the supporters of Hasan, urging the people of Kufa to respond to the call of "their Imam, the son of the daughter of their Prophet".(۲) It seems, however, that the number and strength of Tayy gradually declined in Kufa itself and most of them went and joined their tribesmen in the stronghold of the mountains between Basra and Kufa.(۳) Thus we hear of Tirimmah b. 'Adi at-Ta'i who met Husayn on his way to

Kufa and made a strong appeal to him to abandon his plan of going there and, instead, to come with the former to the safety of the invincible Tayy mountains.(۴)

The city of Kufa was thus organized into seven tribal contingents (muqatila) divided into seven military districts which became the gathering points for mobilization and the administration of stipends and booty. Each group was given its own jabbana: open places for the grazing of cattle and for graveyards.

۱- Kahhala, p.۶۹۱

۲- Maqatil, p. ۶۱; Sharh, XVI, p.۳۸. See p. ۱۴۲ below

۳- Kahhala, p.۶۸۹

۴- Tabari, II, pp.۳۰۴ ff. See p.۲۰۰ ff below

These jabbanas were of great importance in the later development and expansion of the city, because they provided enough space for those who came to Kufa later and joined their respective clansmen.

This grouping of the tribes continued for nineteen years until it underwent another change in ۳۶/۶۵۶, when 'Ali came to Kufa. As will be seen later, during the previous twenty-odd years the power structure within each of the seven groups had drastically changed: certain clans in the various groups had acquired an undue dominating position over the other component parts of the group. Also in this period, some tribes were joined by a large number of newcomers of their tribesmen and became exceedingly numerous, thus upsetting the power balance in the group. 'Ali, therefore, while retaining the number of groups as seven, made some significant changes in the composition and external make-up of these seven groups by way of reshuffling or shifting certain tribes from one group to the other. According to Massignon's analysis,

'Ali rearranged the tribes as follows:

۱: Hamdan and Himyar (Yemenis);

۲: Madhhij, Ash'ar, and Tayy (Yemenis);

۳: Kinda, Hadramawt, Quda'a, and Mahar (Yemenis);

۴: Yemenis) Azd, Bajila, Khath'am, and Ansar);

۵: All the Nizari branches of Qays, 'Abs, Dhubya, and the

'Abd al-Qays of Bahrayn;

۶: Bakr, Taghlib, and all the branches of the Rabi'a

(Nizaris);

۷: (۱). (Nizaris) Quraysh, Kinana, Asad, Tamim, Dabba, Ribab)

Three important points must particularly be noticed in this new grouping. First, there are a few clan names, such as Ash'ar, Mahar, and Dabba, which di۴ not appear in the grouping

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۱- Massignon, Khitat p.۱۱. Cf. Tabari, I, p.۳۱۷۴; Khalif, Hayat ash-Shi'r fi'l Kufa, p.۲۹

of Sa'd. This probably means that these clans were numerically negligible at the time of Sa'd in ۱۷/۶۳۸; by ۳۶/۶۵۸, however, they had become numerous enough to require an individual identity. Secondly, in Sa'd's organization there were three Yemeni groups and four Nizari. In 'Ali reorganization the number of Yemeni groups was raised to four and the Nizaris' reduced to three. It will be pointed out below that from the very beginning the Yemenis were greater in number than the Nizaris (۱۲,۰۰۰ and ۸,۰۰۰ respectively).

Ali seems to have taken into consideration the population strength of the two' branches of the Arabs and reorganized the groups according to their numbers, thus giving the Yemenis their due importance in Kufa. Finally, 'Ali did not change the tribal .basis of genealogies on which Sa'd had organized the population

The fourth and last change in Kufan administration took place fourteen years later, when Ziyad b. Abi Sufyan took charge of the city as governor in ۵۰/۶۷۰. He totally abolished the tribal organization into seven groups and re-organized the entire :population into four administrative blocks (arba') as follows

;Ahl al-'Aliya :۱

;Tamim and Hamdan :۲

;Rabi'a (Bakr) and Kinda :۳

(Madhhij and Asad.(۱ :۴

There are many important points to be observed in Ziyad's reorganization. Firstly, he was governor not only of Kufa but also of Basra, where, from the very beginning, the entire population was divided into four administrative blocks (arba'). This division had proved so successful in controlling the people of Basra that Ziyad decided to apply the same

.Massignon, Khitat, pp.۱۵ f. Cf. Tabari, II, p.۱۳۱; Khalif, op. Cit., pp.۳۰ f -۱

administration system in Kufa as well. Secondly, he com- pletely disregarded the recognized Arabian principle of genealogies and alliances in forming tribal groupings. Instead, he mixed the Nizaris and the Yemenis together, except for the first group, the Ahl al-'Aliya. Thirdly, again excepting the first group, he picked out the six most .powerful tribes and merged all the other smaller clans or tribes with them

The first group, the Ahl al-'Aliya consisted of the branches of the Meccans and Quraysh which he did not disturb because they had been the natural allies of the Qurayshi governors from Sa'd onwards. Moreover, this was the smallest allied group of the population in Ku fa, and Ziyad had nothing to fear from them. In the second block (rub) he combined the Tamim (Nizari) and Kinda (Yemeni). In the third were Bakr (Nizari) and Kinda (Yemeni), and in the fourth, Asad (Nizari) and Madhhij (Yemeni). Over each block he appointed a chief or supervisor of his own choice,(۱) among whose duties must have been the maintenance of a firm control over the component parts of their respective groups. Finally, one cannot fail to observe that Ziyad's reorganization of the Kufan asba' into arba' was based neither on genealogies nor on alliances, but .totally on political considerations intended to consolidate Umayyad power in the city

The exact number of the first settlers in Kufa is difficult to ascertain; nevertheless, from the various reports given by the sources we can make a fairly clear estimate of this. Tabari

Tabari, II, p.۱۳۱ -۱

gives a detailed account of the Arab forces who fought at the battle of Al-Qadisiya, and says there were about ۳۰,۰۰۰ Arabs in this battle.(۱) This figure might be an

exaggerated one, and in any case not all of the Al-Qadisiya veterans stayed at Kufa. According to one report given by Yaqut, 'Umar ordered Sa'd to plan the mosque of Kufa so that it could accommodate the ۴۰,۰۰۰ troops who were to be stationed there.(۲) A more moderate and perhaps more reliable report is given by Baladhuri, who reports on the authority of Ash-Sha'bi that the total number of the first Arab settlers at Kufa was ۲۰,۰۰۰ ۱۲,۰۰۰ Yemenis and ۸,۰۰۰ Nizaris.

To this Baladhuri adds ۴,۰۰۰ Daylamites (al-Hamra'), who were certainly among the first settlers alongside the Arabs.(۳) It seems that the total of ۲۴,۰۰۰, being a moderate estimate compared to other inflated figures, was the number of settlers with which the city of Kufa started its history. Of these first settlers or early comers, as they are often described, special mention must be made of a sizeable body of ۳۷۰ Companions of the Prophet, from among both the Muhajirun and the Ansar, who were domiciled at Kufa soon after its foundation(۴).

Among them were such important personalities as 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud, 'Ammar b. Yasir, Hudhayfa b. al-Yaman, Al-Bara'a b. 'Azib, Salman al-Farisi, Zayd b. al-Arqam, and Abu Musa al-Ash'ari. Ibn Sa'd counts ۷۰ of them as among those who fought for Islam in the first encounter with

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۱- Tabari, I, pp.۲۲۲۱ f.

۲- Ma'jam al-Buldan, IV, p.۳۲۴

۳- Baladhuri, Origins, pp.۴۳۶,۴۴۰; Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan, IV, p.۳۲۳

۴- Ibn Sa'd, VI, p.۹

the Meccans at Badr in ۲/۶۲۳, and ۳۰۰ as among those who renewed their pledge of loyalty to the Prophet at the occasion of the treaty of al-Hudaybiya in ۷/۶۲۸.(۱) This pledge is known as the Bay'at al-Ridwan, and was later considered a source of great Islamic prestige and honour for those who had demonstrated their unshaken belief in Muhammad at that moment of trial.

The heterogeneous nature of the Kufan population, with the absence of any one single tribe as a dominating group, prompted 'Umar to take a special interest in the new city. He thought that the very agglomeration of so many clans and tribes, never experienced before in the Arabian social system, and the presence of so many companions of high standing to infuse Islamic spirit in them, would shape Kufa into a genuinely Islamic cosmopolitan city. So great was 'Umar's interest in Kufa that he described it as "tower of Islam" (qubbat al-Islam) and "the head of the people of Islam" (ras ahl al-Islam). Similarly, in describing the settlers of Kufa he said,

"They are the lance of God, the treasure of faith, the cranium of the Arabs, who protect their own frontier forts and reinforce other Arabs."(۲) It is important to note that these epithets of honour and distinction were not accorded to any other city, such as Damascus or Basra. 'Umar was certainly opposed to the tribal supremacies so predominant in Arabian socio-political system. The heterogeneous character of the Kufan population provided him with a suitable

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۱- ibid, VI, p.۱۲-۶۶

۲- Ibn Sa'd, VI, p.۷; Baladhuri, Origins, p.۴۴۸

ground for establishing an Islamic socio-political system in which tribal hegemony might be submerged under Islamic hegemony. This in effect meant that predominance and leadership must be exercised only by those who possessed Islamic priority (sabiqa), and that tribal authority must be submerged under Islamic authority. The selection of 'Ammar b. Yasir, of no tribal prominence, but one of the earliest converts and a man most devoted to the cause of Islam, as the governor of Kufa, and 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud as deputy governor, was a clear manifestation of his policy.(۱) At the time of their appointments 'Umar wrote to the people of Kufa:

"I am sending you 'Ammar as the governor and 'Abd Allah as your teacher [in Islam] and the deputy [to 'Ammar]. Both of them are from among the most illustrious and distinguished (nujaba') companions of the Prophet. Listen to them and follow them. I

preferred you over my own self [otherwise I would have liked to keep them with me)."(۲) The emphasis put on the qualifications and distinctions of 'Ammar and Ibn Mas'ud as being among the most illustrious

Companions of the Prophet and therefore chosen for the leadership of Kufa reveals 'Umar's intention to replace tribal claims with Islamic claims, and in this way to maintain the political hegemony of Medina.

When in ۲۰/۶۴۱ 'Umar organized the system of distribution of stipends (diwan) his sole criterion was the principle of Islamic priority. He divided the settlers of Kufa into three groups: the various groups of the Muhajirun

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۱- Ibn Sa'd, VI, pp.۱۳ f.; Tabari, I, p.۲۶۴۵

۲- Ibn Sa'd, VI, p.۷

and the Ansar; people who took part in operations against the apostasy and rebellion or, say, prior to Yarmuk and Al-Qadisiya, and then took part in these battles and were known as ahl al-ayyam wa'l Qadisiya; and the rawadif, people who came to Kufa after Yarmuk and Al-Qadisiya, or the second and third waves of migrants, who were graded depending on the time when they first participated in the conquests.(۱) Accordingly, their stipends were fixed at the rates of ۵,۰۰۰ to ۳,۰۰۰, ۳,۰۰۰ to ۲,۰۰۰, and ranging from ۱,۵۰۰ to ۲۰۰ dirhams per annum respec-tively. The most important point for our purpose here is that for the distribution of the stipends each category was divided into smaller groups or units, and a person from each group was appointed as the supervisor of distribution.

These groups were known as 'irafa and the person in charge as the 'arif (pl.'urafa'). In most cases 'irafas were probably composed of people from the same clan, but essentially or coincidentally a group of people with identical standing in Islam,(۲) since usually it was a clan as a whole or a group of related people who converted, rather

than one individual. These 'urafa of Kufa must have had some dominating position in the political affairs of the city. The term Ashraf al-qaba'il in the descriptions of Kufan affairs is generally understood to be only the tribal leaders, but the numbers of these leaders cannot be as high as the impression one gets from the sources. It

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.Tabari, I, pp. ۲۴۱۴ f -۱

"Tabari, I, p.۲۴۹۶. For the institution of the 'arif see E۱۲ article "'Arif -۲

is, therefore, highly possible that these 'urafa' might have assumed the role of leading their respective groups or 'irafas in the troubled days of 'Uthman, 'Ali; and later. It seems rather difficult to identify and apply the term ashraf, as it is so commonly and .widely used by the historians, if the body of Kufan 'urafa' is not included in it

The Muslim empire was expanding at an amazing rate during the caliphate of''Umar, and so grew also the population of Kufa. Two important new influxes must immediately be recognized. First, there were waves of the Arab newcomers called the rawadif who, after the completion of the conquests of Syria, Egypt and the Jezira by ۲۰/۶۴I, seeing no more chances for booty on these western fronts, anticipated a renewal of the offensive into the Persian Empire and thought this would bring them .fresh opportunities for booty and gain

This caused a new Arab influx into Kufa. When the Muslim forces from Kufa were mobilized for the battle of Nihawand in ۲۱/۶۴۲, these newcomers were naturally the most enthusiastic to make their services available, and in the encounters with the Persians these were the people who demonstrated extraordinary valour. 'Umar was so impressed by them that he made some modifications in the policy of his diwan, and raised the stipend of these newcomers to the level of the first settlers, the ahl a۱-Qadisiya.(۱) This gave a further incentive to others to flock into Kufa, thus increasing

the city's Arab population, in most cases

Tabari, I, p.٢۶٣٣ -١

adding to the number of the existing tribes and clans. The second influx into Kufa was that of the new waves of Persians. There were many reasons (which will be elaborated shortly) for their flocking into Kufa in greater numbers than in any other .city

As a result of these new influxes, however, the population of Kufa in a few years' time, even before the close of 'Umar's caliphate, had risen considerably. We are told that soon after

Umar's death, when 'Uthman appointed Al-Walid b. 'Uqba as governor of Kufa in' ٢۴/۶۴۵ or ٢۵/۶۴۶, the number of fighting men (muqatila) alone was ۴٠,٠٠٠.(١) Taking into consideration many of those early comers of Al-Qadisiya, who were no longer capable of bearing arms but made Kufa their permanent home, and a great number of slaves and family members of these ۴٠,٠٠٠ troops, the population in a decade must have risen to well over ١٠٠,٠٠٠. To this figure we must add a good number of those who gradually occupied the

Sawad of Kufa–the rich agricultural land of Iraq–, which

Umar had ruled should not be divided among the conquerors of Al-Qadisiya, but must' be left for those who would come to the region later. The original inhabitants of the Sawad were to be allowed to cultivate the land as people under protection (dhimma), and were to pay taxes to be used for the stipends of the Kufans.(٢) On the other hand, the lands belonging to the

Sassanian kings and the royal families (known as sawafi) were reserved by

Tabari, I, p.۲۸۰۵ -۱
Tabari, I, p.۲۴۱۸ -۲

Umar for the exclusive use of the conquerors of Al-Qadisiya. They were allowed to' divide it among themselves, settling on it if they so wished, or to put in charge of it administrators of their own choosing. The result was that in a short period of time the city of Kufa was surrounded by densely populated villages inhabited by, besides the original cultivators, those who went there to work on the newly acquired estates. This was possible because of the increased number of slaves and labourer classes who were now assembled in the Kufan territories. Moreover, with the expansion of economic life in Kufa, as in other newly founded garrison cities, a great number of tradesmen, craftsmen, and domestics thronged into the towns and settled there .permanently

With this brief outline of the foundation and early development of Kufa, we must now turn to our main purpose of examining the general structure, characteristics, and features of the population which influenced their religiopolitical tendencies and aspirations. This is not an easy task, however. There were many complex factors–geographical, historical, ethnic, racial, and economic–mixed together, and these .made the city and its people most difficult to analyse

What must be noted first of all is that the population of the city almost since its very foundation was composed of two distinctly unique groups: the Arabs and the Persians. We may call the Arab group the "founding element" and the Persians the "second ."basic element

The Arab element in Kufa was extremely complex in its Composition–more so

p: ۱۵۲

than in any other Arab city. Looking at the list of the seven groups of the tribes enumerated earlier and the subsequent waves of the Arab early comers, one immediately notices that the “Arab element” was extraordinarily heterogeneous in origin and background. It was, in the first place, sharply divided into two groups, the Nizaris and the Yemenis, among which we may further distinguish:

١ A small number of the Quraysh from the Hijaz, with their long-standing reputation for sedentary living, nobility, and sharaf;

٢ Elements that were strongly nomadic, such as Mudar groupings, especially the Tamim and some of their Yemenite neighbours from among the Tayy;

٣ Semi-nomadic elements such as Rabi'a, Asad, Bakr, belonging to or coming from the north, northwest, east, and southeast of Arabia, and 'Abd al-Qays from Al-H ajar;

۴ Truly south Arabian elements coming from further a field, from Hadramawt and Yemen, some of whom had been living a semi-sedentary life there, such as Kinda and Bajila, and others who had lived in true and very ancient settlements, such as Madhhij, Himyar, and Hamdan;(١)

۵ Yet another section of the Arabs who settled down in Kufa at the time of its foundation were some of the Christian tribes such as Taghlib, Nimr, Iyad and even

some Christians from

Najran.(۲) These Christian tribes had been accorded special terms and privileges by the Prophet, which were maintained by Abu Bakr and 'Umar.

Still another section from among the Arabs counted above must necessarily be ۶ recognized: this consisted of the outstanding noble families

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۱- Massignon, Khitat, p. ۱۳; Tabari; I, p.۲۴۱۸

۲- Tabari, I, pp.۲۴۱۸ f.

known as the buyutat al-Arab. Ibn Sa'd particularly notes this point and says that all the noble houses of the Arabs were represented in Kufa, whereas this was not the case in Basra.(۱)

The second basic element of the Kufan population in shaping the character of the city was that of the Persians.

There were many factors which account for their great influx, particularly into Kufa rather than into any other city. Three of these are conspicuous. First, the Arab conquests of Al-Mada'in, Al-Qadisiya, and ultimately the great victory at the battle of Nihawand resulted in a large number of Persian captives falling into the hands of the conquerors as slaves and being brought to the city of Kufa. Most of them soon embraced Islam and earned their freedom from their Arab masters, but remained their allies or clients. Secondly, the geographical affinity of Kufa, being on the border of Sassanian Iraq, made the city the most suitable place for migration for those of the Persians who had lost much of their means of livelihood in the Persian Empire.

To them Kufa promised fresh opportunities. Similarly, a large number of peasants, with the collapse of the Sassanian feudal system and the freedom provided by Muslim rule, found the land no longer profitable and moved to the growing cities for alternative occupations. Kufa was the most attractive place for them. Thirdly, the presence of those ۴,۰۰۰ Persians known as the Daylamites, who had settled down in Kufa from its very foundation, and the

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Ibn Sa'd, VI, p.۱۱ -۱

addition of a sizable number of Nihawand prisoners of war, provided a congenial social atmosphere for other uprooted Persians to join their countrymen there. Moreover, among the prisoners of war there was a considerable number of women who had fallen to the lot of their Arab conquerors. These women became the lawful wives of their Arab captors and bore them children. The result was that in less than twenty years' time, by the time 'Ali came to Kufa, there was a youthful new generation of Kufan Arabs who had Persian mothers. Thus, for example, the mother of the famous scholar of Kufa of this period, Ash-Sha'bi, was a woman captured at the (battle of Jalula.(۱)

It is important to note here that the Persians in Kufa were not granted equal status by their Arab co-citizens in the social system of the city. They were called mawali (sing. mawla), or clients, a term to indicate inferior social standing. Since the mawali played an important role in Kufan religio-political history, especially in Shi'i movements, it would be helpful to know a little more about them. Though the term mawali was originally meant for freed slaves, after the Muslim conquest it was extended to a :variety of non-Arab peoples. In Kufa, the mawali can be divided into five groups

The non-Arab soldiers who adopted Islam and joined the Arab armies. These were mostly the Persian soldiers, who accepted Islam and fought alongside the Arab forces, such as the Hamra', or the Daylamites. They were

Tabari, I. p.۲۴۶۴ -۱

used by the Kufan governors as the police force, and received fair treatment from the Arabs. In most cases they had to join an Arab clan or associate themselves with an Arab chief as their patron, as did the Daylamites when they accepted the leader of the .tribe of Tamim as their patron

The peasants (mainly Persians) whose towns and villages were destroyed during the ۲ Muslim conquests and who left their cultivable land and moved to Kufa in search of other work. The collapse of the Sassanian feudal system and the freedom given by the Muslim rulers allowed the peasants to abandon their land, which was no longer profitable. Due to this fact, the treasury began to lose land taxes and, as a result, the administration increased taxation on those who were still working on their land. This led to many more peasants leaving their land to avoid increased taxation and coming to Kufa for more lucrative employment These peasants, however, made up a group of mawali who were not associated with any tribal group. They were under the direct jurisdiction of the governor, who had extensive powers over them and in return was responsible for their protection. In case of an unintentional homicide committed by (any of them, the treasury had to pay the blood-wit.(۱

The vast groups of Persians and others who converted to Islam, many of them ۳ .coming to Kufa as traders and craftsmen

Their lands were conquered by the Muslims, yet they were not enslaved. They embraced

S.A.A۱-'Ali, Al- Tanzimat al-ijtima'iya wa'l-iqtisadiya fi'l Basra, ۲nd ed. (Beirut, ۱۹۶۹), -۱
.pp.۸۸ ff

Islam on their own, and in order to improve their economic conditions they moved to Kufa and worked as traders and craftsmen. In terms of numbers they probably formed the largest mawali group in Kufa; and with the economic development of the city their numbers were constantly increasing. They were almost independent .members of the tribes with which they were associated for administrative purposes

Freed slaves. This group consisted of those who were taken by the Arabs as ۴ prisoners of war, converted to Islam, and earned their freedom, but were bound to be associated with the family of which they had been the slaves. In the technical or rather the original meaning of the term, they were the real mawali and, in Kufa, their .numbers were second only to the third category mentioned above

Persians and other converts to Islam who belonged to noble families. They were ۵ exempted from the poll-tax (jizya), which they regarded as degrading, but they had to pay on their own lands (kharaj). They seem to have been treated by the Arabs somewhat differently from the other groups of the mawali, since they were the nobles of their own people, even though defeated. They were free to change their wala if they so desired from one tribe to another. Nevertheless, their status remained that of mawali; or second-class citizens, and therefore of subservient positions in the tribe. In many cases, however, their interest in Kufa coincided with that of the Arab (tribal leaders.(۱

The total number of

ibid, p.۸۲ -۱

all classes of mawali; however, increased to the extent that within only a few decades they almost outnumbered their Arab counterparts. In the battle of Jamajim, the mawali forces which came to fight for Ibn al- Ash'ath are reported to have been ۱۰۰,۰۰۰.(۱) With all their numbers and strength, on the whole they were treated by the Arabs as second-class citizens. The Arabs maintained against them not only the idea that they were the conquerors, but also a superior racial attitude. This naturally led to .an ever- growing feeling of discontent among the mawali in Kufa

To this population structure three observations must be added. Firstly, from its very beginning Kufa was not a purely Arabian city such as Mecca, Medina, or even .Damascus

Secondly, the majority of the first settlers in Kufa, whether Arabs or Persians, were the military contingents who, in most cases, came without their families and for quite some time lived as a standing army ready for action. It seems natural that their militant character should persist even though ultimately they settled down as civilians and were joined by other sophisticated groups from among both the Arabs and the Persians. This, along with many other factors, explains their restlessness, their resentful and often rebellious behaviour. Finally, and perhaps most important, Kufa had no tradition of its own which could have absorbed or influenced the people. After the great outward thrust from the Peninsula, those of the Arabs who migrate to the cities of Syria, Egypt, and Persia came

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Tabari, II, p.۱۰۷۲ -۱

under the direct impact of and were influenced by the existing traditions of those

cities. Kufa, on the other hand, was founded as a garrison on a virgin plain lying between the Arabian Desert and the old city of the Lakhmid kingdom of Al-Hira, which .had been under the suzerainty and cultural influence of Persia

The newly founded city had to evolve its own character, which was not so easy in such an agglomeration of people, where the Arabs of the North and the South, or the Nizaris and Yemenis, the nomads and the sedentaries, the old aristocracies of the famous noble houses (buyutat al-'Arab) and the commoners, and the Persians of various classes came to live together. Yet there was one factor to dominate the trend of the majority of the people. Among the Arab element of the population, the Yemenis, or South Arabians, were more numerous (١٢,٠٠٠) than the Nizaris, or the North Arabians (٨,٠٠٠). It has been discussed in detail in Chapter I that the South Arabians, due to their long and deep-rooted tradition of the priest-king with hereditary sanctity and therefore hereditary succession, were more prone toward .what we called the Shi'i ideal of leadership of the community

In this they were joined by the Persian element of the population, which had an almost similar tradition of religio-political leadership. Thus, the Yemenis and the Persians together, making more than two-thirds of the population, set the trend of the city well on the road toward Shi'i inclinations

and moods of thinking. This does not, however, mean that all the Yemenis residing in Kufa were Shi'is, or that none of the Nizaris of the northern Arabs sided with the Shi'i school of thought. In such a complex situation a clear-cut categorisation would not be correct. What is suggested reflects general tendencies of the major groups based on certain backgrounds which might be easily suppressed should there arise politico-economic considerations. The first serious tension in Kufa, however, appeared on the surface as a clash of interests between the two power groups, which we may term the newly emerging "religious or Islamic hierarchy" and the "traditional tribal aristocracy". The first group consisted of those Companions of the Prophet whose claim to the leadership of Kufa rested on their early conversion, their services to the

cause of Islam, and above all the esteem in which they were held by the Prophet .himself

As has been said earlier, 'Umar wanted to govern Kufa through those who possessed Islamic priority and thereby to undermine and suppress tribal authority. He did not, therefore, allow anyone from among the ridda leaders to have any position of .command, no matter how powerful they were

The other power group consisted of tribal leaders whose claims, according to the old Arabian tradition, were based on their wealth and the status, strength, and prestige of the tribes they led. Naturally, it was difficult for them to tolerate for long the supremacy and leadership of those who had no tribal authority or

p: ۱۶۰

.who belonged to no ruling family

As long as 'Umar lived, the tribal leaders could not do much to exert their power. With the death of 'Umar and the succession of the weak 'Uthman in ۲۳/۶۴۳, things started to change drastically and the struggle for power, so far suppressed, came into the open. The appointment of Al-Walid b. 'Uqba, 'Uthman's half brother and an aristocrat himself, as the governor of Kufa greatly helped the tribal leaders to restore their .power and authority

Thus we find that not only the strong tribal leaders but even the ridda leaders emerged with full vigour and were soon at the helm of affairs in the province.(۱) For example, Al-Ash'ath b. Qays al-Kindi, a famous leader of the apostates, was entrusted with sole command of Ardabi۱, and a large number of people dispatched there to form

a permanent settled force were put under his command.(۲) This was done at the expense of those: Kinda leaders, such as Hujr b. 'Adi al-Kindi, who had mort Islamic prestige than tribal. Another glaring example was the appointment of Sa'id b. Qays al-Hamdani to Rayy,(۳) where Yazid b. Qays al-Arhabi had been in charge since ۲۲۱۶۴۳.(۴)

The former belonged to one of the most influential families of Hamdan, but had no Islamic priority, whereas the latter possessed status mainly as an Islamic leader, though in Hamdani tribal hierarchy he had hardly any significant place. That a leader such as Al-Ash'ath, with his ridda background, and Sa'id b. Qays, with no standing

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۱- Tabari; I, p.۲۶۶۸

۲- Tabari, I, p.۲۹۲۷

۳- ibid.

۴- Tabari, I, p.۲۶۵۱

in Islamic terms, should receive high offices, was clearly a major departure from the existing order.

This suddenly changed the power structure and resulted in the displacement of those early comers whose social status and power base was Islamic rather than tribal In the long list of such displaced leaders, of particular interest are Malik b. Ashtar an-Nakha'i, Musayyab b. Najaba al-Fazari; Yazid b. Qays al-Arhabi, 'Adi b. Hatim al-Ta'i and Sa'sa'a b. Suhan al-'Abdi. Unseated from their positions, these notables of Kufa, also described by the sources as among the leading qurra' of Kufa,(۱) were among the strongest opponents of Al-Walid b. 'Uqba and his successor, Sa'id b. al-'As, another aristocrat of Mecca, and consequently of 'Uthman, who allowed himself to be dominated by the old aristocracy. Not long afterward, the opposition grew both in strength and dimension and was joined by a large number of people who came to Medina. The rebellion resulted in the murder of 'Uthman. The mode of the city was thus set, dividing the population into two groups:

The strong and influential tribes and clan leaders along with their followings, : ١ especially from among the early comers. These leaders are generally described as ;the ashraf al-qaba'il

People less influential in terms of tribal or clan leadership, who nevertheless had : ٢ been in privileged positions during the time of 'Umar due to their Islamic priority, and who were now deprived of their power. They included most of the late comers, a large number of the qurra' or

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Baladhuri, Ansab, V, p.۴۶ -١

religious intelligentsia of different affiliations and backgrounds, a number of splinte clan groups, and a great majority of hodge-podge people from among both the early comers and the late settlers. The Persian element, or the mawali; of the city naturally .had to throw in their lot with this second category

It is against this background that the third and most critical phase of Kufan history began. The first phase had seen the city's foundation in ١٧/۶٣٨ and extended until the death of 'Umar in ٢۴/۶۴۴; the second ended with the death of''Uthman in ٣۵/۶۵۵; this ushered in the third phase, which was dominated by the rise of 'Ali to the caliphate in .the same year

As has been discussed in Chapter ۴, 'Ali was installed as the caliph mainly by the popular vote of the Ansar of Medina and the rebel contingents who came from the provinces. The Kufan contingent was the first to pay homage to 'Ali under the

leadership of Malik al-Ashtar.(١) Naturally, the overwhelming support of these elements for 'Ali's election to the supreme authority was taken as a serious threat not only by the Umayyad aristocracy, which during twelve years of Uthman's rule had appropriated all positions of power and advantage for themselves, but also by Quraysh in general. In opposition to 'Ali, therefore, besides the Umayyads in Syria, there emerged at Mecca a body of Quraysh, many of them

Companions and Muhajirun, who, while being opposed to Umayyad domination, in fact under their mask as Muhajirun favoured overall

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Tabari; I, pp.٣٠٧۵ ff; AI-Imama wa'l-siyasa, I, p.۴٧ -١

domination by Quraysh.(١) Military power was now divided into two rival military camps, Kufa and Basra, with large territories under their influence, whereas Syria was .wholly under the firm control of the Umayyads

Taking advantage of the rivalry between Basra and Kufa, the Meccans moved to Basra to mobilize tribal support from there. 'Ali was thus left with no choice but to leave Medina for Iraq and count on the support of the Kufans, who had shown their inclinations towards him. He arrived in the neighbourhood of Kufa with about ١,٠٠٠ men who accom- panied him from Medina, and was readily joined by about ١٢,٠٠٠ Kufans.(٢) They formed the main part of his army at the battle of Al-Jamal. The Meccan-Basran alliance was defeated, and 'Ali was able to bring Basra well under his .control and appointed 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas as his governor

Ali then entered Kufa, not to make it his capital, but only to mobilize further support' .and organize the Kufans for another much more serious encounter with Mu'awiya

What should be noted here, however, is that at the battle of Al-Jamal, while a large section of the Kufans supported 'Ali, the clan and tribal leaders who had entrenched themselves during the caliphate of 'Uthman did not wish to side with him, or at least they remained uncommitted. These tribal leaders, such as Al-Ash'ath b. Qays, Jarir b. 'Abd Allah, and Sa'd b. Qays, undoubtedly felt the same fears of 'Ali as did the Meccans and the Umayyads. In order

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۱- Hind, op. cit., p.۳۶۱

۲- Tabari, I, p.۳۱۷۴

to consolidate his power in Kufa, 'All had to establish a purely Islamic socio- political system, which meant that the old Islamic leadership in Kufa had to be restored at the expense of traditional tribal aristocracy that had emerged during the caliphate of''Uthman.

As has been said earlier, the population of Kufa was organized in seven tribal groups according to either genealogies or alliances. It was in that tribal grouping that the new leadership had established its roots. The first step 'Ali took to weaken this leadership was to make some drastic changes in the external composition of these seven groups by reshuffling and reorganizing the tribes from one group to the other. In this way he tried to restore to power those erstwhile leaders whose claims were based on Islamic priority. We see that men such as Malik b. Harith al-Ashtar, Hujr b. 'Adi al-Kindi; and 'Adi b. Hatim al-Ta'i, eclipsed by the strong tribal leaders, re- emerged once again. For example, Al-Ash'ath b. Qays was replaced by Hujr b. 'Adi, and in the battle of Siffin Hujr was given the leadership of Kinda.(۱) AI-Ashtar became the leader of a new clan group consisting of Madhhij, Nakha'i, and some other sub-clans. His position was further strengthened when he was appointed by 'Ali as the governor of the Jazira.(۲)

Similarly, another early leader, 'Adi b. Hatim, was supported by 'Ali to become the sole leader of the Tayy, even though there was considerable opposition from other

branches of the

(tribe.(۳

,Leaders such as Al-Ashtar

Nasr, Waq'at Siffin, p.۱۰۵ -۱

Ibn A'tham, II, p.۳۵۰; Nasr, Waq'at Siffin, p.۱۲ -۲

Tabari, I, p.۳۲۷۹ -۳

Hujr, and 'Adi, together with their following, especially from the newcomers of their tribes, formed the backbone of 'Ali's supporters and were the nucleus of the Shi'i of Kufa. On the other hand, the strongest clan leaders, who had built themselves up on the strength of their tribes, did not show much interest in 'Ali. The sharp contrast between these two groups is clearly illustrated by the fact that since 'Ali's arrival in Kufa, Al-Ashtar, Hujr, 'Adi and other Shi'i leaders consistently urged 'Ali to attack Mu'awiya without delay and without entering into correspondence with him, while (most of the strong tribal leaders advised him not to take any early action.(۱

When, however, the armies of 'Ali and Mu'awiya came to meet at Siffin, these tribal leaders of Kufa saw their position as precarious. They could not remain completely aloof from 'Ali and had to appear with him on the battlefield; yet they remained half-hearted and lukewarm. In fact, they saw their interests best served by a deadlock .between Ali and Mu'awiya

They were in a dilemma, in that 'Ali's success would mean a loss of their tribal power, but on the other hand, Mu'awyia's victory would mean the loss of the Iraqi independence upon which their power depended. In short, “from the time of 'Ali's arrival in Kufa, through the time of the confrontation at Siffin and subsequent developments in Iraq, and until the time of his death, the position of these two

alignments remained consistent. The Shi'i leaders

Tabari, I, p.۳۲۵۶ -۱

urged 'Ali to fight Mu'awiya, they were opposed to the arbitration proposal, and they pledged themselves to 'Ali unconditionally. Most of the clan leaders, on the other hand, showed no inclination to fight Mu'awiya went to Siffin in a spirit of indifference, and accepted with alacrity the peace offered by the arbitration proposal."(۱)

It is generally suggested that the qurra' forced 'Ali to submit to arbitration, but it seems that the tribal leaders and their following were in fact responsible, for they had nothing to gain from fighting and much to gain from a stalemate.

Similarly, it is also stated that it was the qurra' group which compelled 'Ali to accept Abu Musa al-Ash'ari as his arbitrator, though Abu Musa's record indicated that he had been in favour of the Meccans and of overall domination by Quraysh, and therefore must have been the choice of the tribal leaders.

The word qurra' as used in the accounts of Siffin must be approached with some caution. The early qurra' of Kufa who led the revolt against 'Uthman had as their leaders such men as Malik, Hujr, and 'Adi; and were the die-hard supporters of 'Ali. Besides these original qurra' of Kufa, at Siffin we meet a great number of people who are described by the sources, rather conveniently, as qurra'. Some of them came from Basra, others from far-off outposts of both territories. They must have been, therefore, tribesmen who were trying to advance their claims through Islamic priority. And these were the people who,

Hind, op. cit., p. ۳۶۳ -۱

misled by the tribal leaders, at first supported arbitration and then revolted against it. They became the Khawarij, and in the events that followed Siffin they further .weakened 'Ali's position both at home and against Mu'awiya

The main reason for the resentful attitude of the ashraf al-qaba'il of Kufa was perhaps 'Ali's egalitarian policy. In the first place, in the distribution of stipends he abolished the distinction made between early and latecomers to Kufa and instead made his criterion not only Islamic priority, but also adherence to Islamic values and standards. This is so very clear from the numerous addresses he delivered in this period, as preserved in the Nahj al-Balagha.(۱) When 'Ali came to Kufa, there was another influx of newcomers to the city, those who came with 'Ali himself, and he .treated them with equality irrespective of their early domicile

This was a serious threat to the tribal leaders who had been enjoying a larger share of the Kufan treasury, which had already been shrinking in its resources due to the lull in the conquests In the second place, 'Ali observed equality in the allotment of stipends to Arabs and non-Arabs. This was especially offensive to the ashraf al-qaba'il since, besides financial considerations, they believed that the non-Arab mawali, as conquered people, should not and could not be treated equally with their (conquerors.(۲

It was beyond any doubt clear to the tribal leaders and their clansmen that under Ali's rule they stood to lose whatever they had managed to gain due

e.g., Khutabat nos. ۲۱, ۲۳, ۲۴, ۴۲, to cite but a few -۱

For 'Ali's fiscal policies and egalitarian attitude, see Tabari, I, p.۳۲۲۷ -۲

to their tribal strength under 'Uthman. It was, however, still not possible or advisable for them, in the conditions in Kufa at the time, to come out in open revolt against 'Ali. Nevertheless, after the inconclusive results of Siffin and the unfavourable outcome of the arbitration that followed, the tribal leaders hitherto wavering between indifference and treachery became more pronounced in their resentful attitude toward 'Ali. They did remain in the rank and file of his army, which he was mobilizing for a final and decisive encounter with Mu'awiya, yet totally ignored his call to go out .to fight the Syrians

Instead they insisted on dealing with the Khawarij who had gathered at Nahrawin.(۱) What they were concerned with was the maintenance of their own position as Kufan tribal leaders: the Khawarij were a threat to that, Mu'awiya was not. After the Khawarij were defeated at Nahrawan and 'Ali then called upon them to move against Mu'awiya, Al-Ash'ath and other strong tribal leaders refused, ostensibly on lame excuses, and 'Ali was thus obliged to return to Kufa.(۲) 'Ali's position was further weakened since the battle of Nahrawan had earned him many enemies among the relatives and kinsmen of the slain Khawarij; additionally, the tribal leaders took further advantage of his increasing unpopularity among the large number of tribes. Moreover, since the arbitration Mu'awiya had been in constant touch with these tribal leaders, trying to win them over through offers of power and wealth. They were thus deliberating on what could best

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Mas'udi, Muruj, II, p.۴۰۴ -۱

ibid., p.۴۰۷ -۲

.serve their purposes

The attitude of these Kufans is best indicated by 'Ali himself in a number of speeches which he delivered in this period. In one of his speeches shortly before he was :assassinated, he addressed the people and said

Behold, I have called upon you day and night, secretly and openly, to fight these“ people [the Syrians]. I have said to you: 'Fight them before they fight you, for, by God, never do a people fight within their own territory without being dishonoured.' Butyou tarried and vacillated until you have been attacked repeatedly and your territory has been lost to you .. How strange indeed–a strangeness in which God makes the hearts dead and brings grief–is the gathering of these people [Mu'awiya's supporters] in their falsehood and your standing aloof from your right. Woe unto you, and fire upon you, for you have become a target which is shot at; you are raided and you raid not; you are attacked and you do not fight back; and God is disobeyed and you are content to .see that

When I order you to march toward them during the summer season, you say: 'This is“ the season of intense heat; grant us respite until the heat has abated from us.' And when I command you to proceed toward them in winter, you say: 'This is the season of intense cold; give us time until the cold is dispelled from us.' With all this fleeing from heat and cold, by God, you will flee

p: ۱۷۰

.even more readily from the sword

O you who look like men but are not men, having the intellect of children and the wits“ of women, I wish I had never seen or known you, for acquaintance with you has drawn regret and brought in its wake grief and sorrow. May God destroy you. You have filled my heart with pus and have lined my breast with anger. You have made me

drink draughts of anxiety one after the other and have corrupted my judgment by your disobedience and desertion, so that Quraysh say that the son of Abu Talib is a brave man but had no knowledge of warfare. For God be their father! Is any one of them more experienced in warfare or does any of them occupy a place in it higher than mine? I started fighting when I was not yet twenty years of age, and here I am the same fighter when I have passed the age of sixty. But there could be no judgment for him who is not obeyed.(۱)

Ali thus left behind the people of Kufa divided into two groups of conflicting interest' which could now be more easily defined and categorised than when he arrived at Kufa five years earlier. There was, firstly, a group of his faithful followers, both from the early and the late comers, who were not only committed to his person, but also believed that the leadership of the Muslims must remain in the house of the Prophet. In

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۱ - Nahj al-Balagha, I, pp. ۷۶-۷۹; Mubarrad, Kamil, I, pp.۲۰ f., with slightly different readings in some cases. I have followed the Nahj al- Balagha's text.

this, indeed, there appear to have been some considerations of a socio-economic nature, but these were only concomitant with the idea of justice and religious values which, they thought, could be realized only through a divinely inspired leader. Among them there were people, however small in number, to whom religious and spiritual considerations were the only driving force: economic factors, even though these seem to have been the cause of certain incidents, had nothing to do with their adherence to 'Ali. For others, economic factors were just as important as religion; they felt that an appropriate combination of the two could be realized only through 'Ali. Whatever the degree of emphasis on one aspect or the other, the conviction of both sections of 'Ali's firm supporters was the same: the leadership of the Muslim community must come from the family of the Prophet.

Secondly, there was a group consisting of clan and tribal leaders, along with those whose interests were dependent on these leaders. They were basically interested in preserving and maintaining their political positions and economic monopolies, which would be seriously threatened should 'Ali succeed in firmly establishing his rule in Kufa. They were, therefore, indifferent to 'Ali and were inclined towards Mu'awiya, in whom they saw security for their privileged positions and vested interests. But at the same time, they were hesitant to openly submit to Mu'awiya and thereby lose their bargaining position. It was for this reason that outwardly they remained in the rank and file of 'Ali's

.army while putting pressure on Mu'awiya for the guaranteeing of their privileges

.They thus pretended to be the supporters of the Shi'i cause

These were the people who composed the political supporters of 'Ali, as discussed in .Chapter ۴

To these two groups of opposite interest we must add a third, consisting of the vast masses of Kufa, mostly the Yemenis and the non-Arab mawali, who theoretically were inclined to the Shi'i ideal of leadership but were hopelessly devoid of resolve in the face of any danger which might befall them. Emotionally, whenever they saw any hope of success of someone from the Ahl a۱-Bayt, they swarmed around him; practically, they deserted him as soon as they saw the hope of success dwindling away. They lacked the necessary courage or the firmness of character to withstand a .moment of trial

The events described in the following two chapters will explain the behaviour and attitude of these three groups. Here it remains to note that after the death of 'Ali and the abdication of his son Hasan, when Mu'awiya took control of Kufa, the strong tribal and clan leaders were made to serve as the intermediaries in the power structure of .the province

The central authority in Damascus was concerned with exercising power both over and through them. The old style tribalism was reinforced and governmental power was grounded on a tribal organization in which tribal leaders supported and in turn were supported by the government. At the time of 'Ali's death, the tribal leaders were

on one side of the scale, the committed shi'at 'Ali on the other, while the great masses were wavering between the two. The following years were to prove decisive in .resolving this basic contradiction of interests

Chapter ۶: The Abdication of Hasan

During the last year of 'Ali's caliphate, Muawiya b. Abi Sufyan, the governor of Syria and the main challenger of 'Ali, managed to bring a large part of the Muslim empire under his control. He also had the authority vested in him, though under doubtful and ambiguous circumstances, by 'Amr b. al-As at the arbitration of Adruh after the battle of Siffin. Nevertheless, he could not claim for himself the title of Amir al-Mu'minin while 'Ali was yet alive. 'Ali was still the legitimate caliph chosen by the community at large in Medina; this was not publicly repudiated by the community as a whole, nor was the declaration of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari deposing 'Ali and that of 'Amr b. al-'As installing Mu'awiya accepted by the Muhajirun and the Ansar. Thus, despite all his military and political successes, Mu'awiya could do no more than style himself only as (Amir.(۱

With 'Ali's assassination, the road was finally cleared for the realization of the ultimate goal of Mu'awiya's ambitions. The very favourable circumstances that prevailed in the form of the impotence of Medina and the remnant of the pious section of the community and the vacillating nature of the Iraqi supporters of 'Ali's successor Hasan, coupled with the characteristic shrewdness of Mu'awiya, made it easier for

p: ۱۷۴

Tabari, II, p.۵ -۱

him to complete the task he had initiated after the death of 'Uthman: the seizure of .the caliphate for himself and his clan

Hasan, the elder son of 'All and Fatima, was acclaimed as caliph by forty thousand people in Kufa immediately after the death of his father.(۱) We are told that at the battle of Siffin (Safar ۳۷/July ۶۵۷), less than three years before his death, 'Ali had in his army seventy Companions who fought for the

Prophet at Badr, seven hundred of those who renewed their allegiance to Muhammad (bay'at ar-ridwan) at the time of the treaty of Hudaybiya, and another four hundred from other Muhajirun and Ansar.(۲) Many of them were still residing in Kufa with 'Ali as he prepared for a final encounter with Muawiya. They must have participated in the election of Hasan and must have accepted him as the new caliph, otherwise our sources would have recorded their opposition to his succession. To this there is no testimony at all. The people of Medina and Mecca seem to have received the news with satisfaction, or at least with acquiescence. This is evident from the fact that not a single voice of protest or opposition from these cities against Hasan's accession can .be located in the sources

Two major reasons can be advanced for this attitude. First, at the time of 'Ali's death almost all the distinguished Companions of the Prophet from among the Muhajirun were dead. Of the six members of the Shura appointed by 'Umar, only

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۱- Tabari, II, pp. I if.; Mas'udi, Muruj, II, p.۴۲۶; Tanbih, p.۳۰۰; 'Iqd, IV, p.۳۶۱; Ya'qubi, II, pp.۲۱۴ f; Dinawari, pp. ۲۱۶ f.; Isti'ab. I, p. ۳۸۵; Usd al-Ghaba, II, p.۱۴

۲- Ya'qubi, II, p. ۱۸۸. According to Ibn Sa'd, VI, pp.۴, ۳۷۰ early Sahaba immediately moved into Kufa and settled there as soon as 'Umar b. al-Khattab founded the garrison city.

Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas was still alive; the other members of the leading elite of the community had also died.

Among the younger nobility such as 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas, 'Abd Allah b. az-Zubayr, Muhammad b. Talha, and 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar, none could match Hasan, the elder and dearest grandson of the prophet. The people of Medina still remembered that ardent love and affection which the Prophet had showered upon his grandsons: that he interrupted his sermon and descended from the pulpit to pick up Hasan, who had stumbled over his long tunic and fallen down while entering the mosque;(۱) that he allowed his grandchildren to climb on his back while he was prostrating himself in prayer.(۲)

There are numerous accounts describing extraordinary favours being bestowed by Muhammad on his grandsons; these are preserved not only by the Shi'i sources, but are overwhelmingly transmitted by the Sunni works as well.(۳) Hasan is also unanimously reported to have resembled the Prophet in appearance.(۴) Secondly, the people of Mecca and Medina naturally could not be expected to be pleased to see Mu'awiya, the son of Abu Sufyan, the representative of the clan of Umayya, become their leader. It was Abu Sufyan who had organized the opposition to Muhammad and had led all the campaigns against him.

The Umayyads in general, and the Sufyanids in particular, did not acknowledge

Muhammad until the fall of Mecca; their Islam was therefore considered to be of convenience rather than conviction. Mu'awiya, for his part, depended

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Usd al-Ghaba, II, p.۱۲; Tirmidhi, II, p. ۳۰۶; Musnad, V, p.۳۵۴; Hadid, Sharh, XVI, p.۲۷ -۱
Musnad, II, p.۵۱۳ -۲
The standard works of tradition usually devote a separate chapter to the special -۳ merits of Hasan and Husayn (Bab Manaqib al-Hasan wa'l-Husayn).
Ibn Habib, Muhabbar, p. ۴۶; Bukhari, Sahih, II, pp.۱۷۵, ۱۹۸; Usd al-Ghaba, II, p.۱۳ -۴

on the support of the Syrians, whom he had consolidated behind himself, and to whom he had been attached for close to twenty years as governor of the province, and on the support of his large and powerful clan and their clients and allies who swarmed around him. It was therefore natural, under the circumstances, that the inhabitants of the holy cities, who formed the nucleus of the Islamic Umma, would not oppose Hasan's caliphate, especially since the alternative was the son of Abu Sufyan and Hind.

As for the people of Iraq, the eldest son of 'Ali was the only logical choice, though not all of his supporters were motivated by the same feelings or attachment to the same cause. To a great number of them Hasan's succession meant the continuation of 'Ali's policy against the rule of Mu'awiya and against the domination of Syria over Iraq. To some others, Hasan was now the only person worthy of leading the community on religious grounds.

Whether motivated by merely political or by religious considerations, however, it cannot be denied that the Iraqis acclaimed Hasan as caliph on the grounds that he was the grandson of the Prophet through 'Ali and Fatima. Hasan's spontaneous selection after the death of 'Ali also indicated Iraqi inclinations, though in vague terms, towards the legitimate succession to the leadership of the community in the line of 'Ali. It seems that the people of Iraq, even at that early period, were quite clear in

distinguishing the line

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of the Prophet through Fatima from other members of the Hashimite clan, otherwise they would have chosen, for example, 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas, who was a cousin of the Prophet, was senior in age to Hasan and was experienced in affairs of state, having been 'Ali's governor in Basra.(۱) Hasan's close relationship to the Prophet is frequently .referred to as the reason for the special consideration of the people for him

Following the custom established by Abu Bakr, Hasan made a speech on the occasion of his accession to the caliphate. In this speech, reported in many sources with varying lengths and wordings, Hasan praised the merits of his family and the special rights and unmatched qualities of his father. He emphasized his own intimate relations with the Prophet, described his own merits and claims, and quoted the verses of the Qur'an which exalt the special position of the Ahl al-Bayt.(۲) Qays b. Sa'd b. 'Ubada al-Ansari, an ardent supporter of 'Ali and a trusted commander of his army, .was the first to pay homage to him

The forty thousand troops of Iraq who had sworn allegiance to 'Ali on the condition to die for him ('ala'l-mawt) readily hailed Hasan as their new caliph.(۳) Apparently expressing his own sentiments as well as those of the Iraqi army, Qays tried to impose the condition that the bay'a should be based, not only on the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet, but also on the condition of the war (qital) against those

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۱ - According to Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil at-Talibiyin, p.۵۲, 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas himself was the first to advance Hasan's nomination and invite the people to pay homage to him as the caliph after the death of 'Ali. See also Hadid, Sharh, XVI, .pp.۳۱ f

۲- Dinawari, p. ۲۱۶; Maqatil, p.۵۲; Hadid, Sharh, XVI, p.۳۰

;Tabari, II, p. I; Usd al-Ghaba, II, p.۱۴ -۳

who declared licit (halal) that which is illicit (haram). Hasan, however, succeeded in avoiding this commitment by saying that the last condition was implicitly included in the first two. The more militant among the Iraqis, eager to fight against Mu'awiya, were not in favour of exclusion of the third condition from the terms of the bay'a, but (they nevertheless paid their allegiance to him.(۱

Later events would demonstrate that Hasan was perhaps from the very beginning quite apprehensive of the fickle-mindedness of the Iraqis and their lack of resolution in time of trials; and thus he wanted to avoid commitment to an extreme stand which might lead to complete disaster. He was moreover a peace-loving man of mild temper who hated to see the shedding of Muslim blood.(۲) However, according to the majority of the sources, the oath of allegiance taken by those present stipulated that: "They should make war on those who were at war with Hasan, and should live in peace with (those who were at peace with Hasan."(۳

Hasan's acclamation as caliph by the Iraqis, and a tacit approval, at least an absence of protest or opposition, from the Hijaz, Yemen, and Persia, were a great cause of alarm to Mu'awiya, who had been working for the office since the death of 'Uthman and who, after five years of ceaseless struggle, at last saw a clear path to undisputed authority since 'Ali was no longer alive. He lost no time in taking action. First of all, as soon

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Hadid, loc. cit.; Isti'ab,I, p. ۳۸۳ -۱

.ibid -۲

Ibn A'tham, IV, p.۱۴۸; Tabari; II, p.۵; Hadid, Sharh, XVI, p.۲۲ -۳

as the news of Hasan's selection reached Mu'awiya, he denounced the appointment, and both in speeches and in letters announced his firm decision not to recognize

Hasan a caliph.(۱) secondly, he dispatched many of his agents and spies to arouse the people against Hasan. Such agents had already been quite active in the provinces of Yemen, Persia, and the Hijaz, which were still within 'Air's domain though not fully .under his control at the time he was killed

These agents were active even in the heart of Iraq and Kufa, 'Ali's only solid possession. Of this activity there is no doubt at all. This already organized espionage network was now intensified by Mu'awiya and expanded to a much larger scale. There are numerous exchanges of letters on the subject of these spies between Hasan and Mu'awiya and between 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas and Mu'awiya. (۲) Mu'awiya did not even deny these subversive activities. Finally, he began preparations for war and summoned all the commanders of his forces in Syria, Palestine, and Transjordan .to join him

Not long after, the Syrian leader marched against Hasan with an army of sixty thousand men,(۳) taking the usual military route through Mesopotamia to Maskin, on the Tigris boundary of Mosul towards the Sawad. When Mu'awiya warlike intentions became clear, Hasan had to prepare for war and was compelled to take the field before he had time either to strengthen himself in his position or to reorganize the administration that had been thrown into chaos by the

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۱- Maqatil, pp.۵۲ f.; Hadid, Sharh, XVI, pp.۲۵ f.

۲- Aghani, XXI, p. ۲۶; Maqatil, loc. cit.; Ya'qubi, II, p.۲۱۴; Hadid, Sharh, XVI, p.۳۱

۳- Ibn A'tham, IV, p.۱۵۳; Hadid, Sharh, XVI, p.۲۶

.death of his father

The purpose of this prompt action by Mu'awiya was two fold: first, by his demonstration of arms and strength, he hoped to force Hasan to come to terms; and secondly, if that course of action failed, he would attack the Iraqi forces before they

had time to consolidate their position. It was for the first reason that Mu'awiya intentionally moved towards Iraq at a very slow pace, while sending letter after letter .to Hasan asking him not to try to fight and urging him to come to terms

If Hasan was defeated on the battlefield, this would give Mu'awiya only power and authority; but if Hasan abdicated, this would provide Mu'awiya with a legal base and legitimize his authority as well. This was what was trying to achieve. Moreover, Hasan defeated, or even killed, still represented a serious threat unless he resigned his rights; another member of the Hashimite house could simply claim to be his successor. Should he resign in favour of Mu'awiya, such claims would have no validity and the Umayyad position would be secured. This strategy proved correct, as will be seen below. Even after the death of Hasan, ten years later, when the people of Iraq approached his younger brother Husayn concerning an uprising, the latter advised them to wait as long as Mu'awiya was alive because of Hasan's treaty

.with him

The correspondence between Hasan and Mu'awiya, which continued throughout this period, makes interesting reading and provides some useful information. Both referred to the

old question of the caliphate with polemical arguments. In one of his long letters to Mu'awiya, Hasan argued his rights to the caliphate on the grounds that the authority of the caliphate stems from the Prophet of God, who was the most excellent and the best of men on earth and through whose guidance the Arabs found light while they were deep in darkness and attained honour and glory while they were disgraced, and that Hasan was the nearest to the Prophet in blood and relationship. Hasan then used his father's argument, which the latter had advanced against Abu Bakr after the death of Muhammad, that if Quraysh could claim the leadership over the Ansar on the grounds that the Prophet belonged to Quraysh, then the members of his family, who

were the nearest to him in every respect, were better qualified for the leadership of :the community. In the last part of his letter Hasan wrote

We were shocked to see that some people snatched away our right from us even" though they were men of excellence, virtues, and merits, and were the forerunners in Islam [reference to the first three caliphs]. But now what a great astonishment and shock it is to see that you, O Mu'awiya, are attempting to accede to a thing which you do not deserve. You do not possess any known merit in religion (din), nor have you any trace (athar) in Islam which has ever been praised. On the contrary, you are the son

of the leader of the opposition party from among the parties (hizb min al-ahzab) [a reference to the "confederacy" which under Mu'awiya's father, Abu Sufyan, made the last united effort to crush Medina]; and you are the son of the greatest enemy of the Prophet from among Quraysh... so give up your persistence in falsehood (batil) and enter into my homage as other people have done, for you are certainly aware of the fact that I am far more entitled to the caliphate than you in the eyes of God and all worthy people. Fear God, restrain yourself from rebellion and from shedding the blood of the Muslims; for, by God, there would be no good for you to meet your Lord (with the responsibility of the blood of the Muslims."(۱)

Mu'awiya's detailed reply to Hasan is even more interesting, especially since he used the argument used by 'Umar b. al-Khattab against 'Ali. Writing to Hasan, Mu'awiya :argued

Whatever you said about the excellence and merits of the Prophet, he was indeed" the most excellent among all men before and after him, past or present, young or old.

Indeed God had chosen Muhammad for His message, and through him we received .guidance, were saved from destruction, and came out from darkness and error

You have mentioned the death of the Prophet and the dispute which took place" among the Muslims at that time. In this you are clearly making accusations against Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Abu 'Ubayda, and against those virtuous men among

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Maqatil, p. ۵۶ (from Abi Mikhnaf); Ibn A'tham, IV, p.۱۵۱; Hadid, Sharh, XVI, p.۲۴ (from -۱ (Mada'ini), p.۳۳ (from Abi Mikhnaf with slight variations

the Muhajirun and Ansar. I hate this accusation against the people whose actions, .according to us and other people, were beyond doubt and reproach

When this community had some disagreements after the Prophet concerning the" leadership, it was not ignorant of your family's merits, your priority, and your close relationship to the Prophet; and the community was also not unaware of your exalted place in Islam and your qualifications in it. But the community saw that this thing [the caliphate] would be better placed among Quraysh in general and they therefore .selected Abu Bakr

This is what the people thought best in the interest of the community. You are asking me to settle the matter peacefully and surrender, but the situation concerning you and me today is like the one between you [your family] and Abu Bakr after the death of the Prophet. Had I believed that you had a better grasp over the subject people than I do, that you could protect the community better than I, and you were stronger in safeguarding the properties of the Muslims and in outwitting the enemy than I, then I would have done what you have asked me. But I have a longer period of reign [probably referring to his governorship], and am more experienced, better in policies,

and older in age than you. It would therefore be better for you not to insist on what you have asked me; if you enter into obedience to me now, you will accede to the

p: ۱۸۴

(caliphate after me."(۱

Mu'awiya's letter is significant in that it gives a clear idea of the direction Muslim polity was henceforth opting to adopt openly. Mu'awiya's arguments for his claims to the caliphate manifest those guidelines and the principles by which the question of the caliphate had been previously decided in the case of the first three caliphs, and he claimed that the same considerations must remain the deciding factors now and in .the future

To him it was the interest of the state and the profane aspects of the community which must decide the question of the leadership. Mu'awiya did not deny Hasan's exalted position in relation to the Prophet and his superior place in Islam, but claimed that this was not the criterion for the leadership of the community. The qualifications for the office, according to Mu'awiya's arguments, were personal power and strength, ability in political affairs and administration, expansion of the empire, and ability to defend the Muslims and rule the subject effectively. In this way, Mu'awiya made explicit what had been so far implicit: the separation between political and religious principles, which was henceforth permanently established. Thus, in due course, the majority of the Muslims placed the religious leadership in the totality of the community (Jama'a), represented by the 'ulama', as the custodian of religion and the exponent of the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet, while accepting state authority .as binding

They came to be known as the Sunnis. A minority of the Muslims, on

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Maqatil, p.۵۷ (from Abu Mikhnaf); Ibn A'tham, IV, p.۱۵۲; Hadid, Sharh, XVI, p.۲۵ (from -۱ (Mada'ini), p.۳۵ (from Abu Mikhnaf with slight variations

the other hand, could not find satisfaction for their religious aspirations except in the charismatic leadership from among the people of the house of the Prophet, the Ahl al-Bayt, as the sole exponents of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunna, although this .minority too had to accept the state's authority. This group was called the Shi'a

Before proceeding further in an attempt to reconstruct the events which ultimately led to the abdication of Hasan, a word seems necessary regarding the sources of our information on the subject. The struggle between Hasan and Mu'awiya has not yet been thoroughly and critically studied and remains one of the most obscure chapters of early Islamic history. Wellhausen, giving only a short and sketchy account of Hasan's abdication,(۱) complains that the events are recorded with confusion and fragmentation and that it is, therefore, difficult to place certain critical details of the episode in precise chronological order. Indeed, chronology is always a serious problem in early Muslim histories. But in his brief description of the subject it seems that Wellhausen depended solely on Ya'qubi,(۲) Dinawari,(۳) 'and Tabari.(۴) Both Yaqubi and Dinawari usually gloss over details in their short and compact histories, and it would therefore be futile to expect from them a comprehensive account of the .abdication of Hasan

Tabari provides more information than the first two but does not cover the subject with his usual thoroughness and he leaves the reader unsatisfied on many important questions. Moreover, all three of these sources suffer from a

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Arab Kingdom, pp.۱۰۴-۷ -۱

.Ta'rikh, II, pp. ۲۱۴ f -۲

.Akhbar, pp.۲۱۷ ff -۳

Ta'rikh, II, pp. ۱-۸ -۴

common weakness in that their renderings lack the exact sequence of events, a problem which makes it difficult to determine whether Hasan abdicated of his own .free will or was forced by the circumstances to do so

There are, however, three other early and important sources which were not' used by or were unavailable to Wellhausen. These works, already referred to above, were authored by Ibn A'tham al-Kufi(١) (died ca. ٣١۴/٩٢۶), Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani(٢) (died ٣۵۶/٩۶٧), and Ibn Abi'l-Hadid(٣) (died ۶۵۵/١٢۵٧). Abi'l-Faraj records the whole event from Abu Mikhnaf with verifications and additions from five other chains of transmitters, commenting that "these narratives are mixed one with the other, but are near in ".meaning to each other

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, though a late author, is one of the best informed. He takes his material primarily from the famous early historian Mada'ini and completes the account from Abu Mikhnaf. The second part of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid's account thus is similar to the corresponding portion of Abu'l-Faraj; the fact that both Abo Mikhnaf and Mada'ini wrote on the subject is confirmed by the lists of their works recorded by Ibn (Nadim.(۴

Abu Muhammad Ahmad b. A'tham al-Kufi al-Kindi must be given a place of special importance, for his Kitab al-Futuh is perhaps one of the earliest comprehensive and systematic works on the early conquests of Islam and the civil strife in the community. According to Doctor Sha'ban,(۵) a modern scholar, this work was composed in ٢٠۴/٨١٩; this mean: his date of death must be placed some time

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Kitab al-Futuh, IV, pp.١۴٨-۶٧ -١

Maqatil, pp. ۴۶-٧٧ -٢

Sharh, XVI, pp. ٩-۵٢ -٣

Fihrist, PP.۰۳, ۱۰۱ f., respectively. The importance of these two authors in early -۴ .Muslim historiography has been discussed in Chapter ۲

"M. A. Sha'ban, E۱۲ article 'Ibn A'tham -۵

in the middle of the ۳rd/۹th century and not in ۳۱۴/۹۲۶ as has so far been assumed. In any case, his history has proved to be a major source for the early history of the Arabs, particularly for events in Iraq. Ibn A'tham was fortunate enough to have access to the works of Zuhri, Abu Mikhnaf, Ibn al-Kalbi, and some other lesser traditionists in their original and unadulterated forms. According to his methodology, as is evident in the Futuh, he combines the traditions of these early writers into a connected and coherent historical narrative without interruptions and without citing .his sources for each individual tradition

Nevertheless, whenever he records some significant tradition, he does mention the name of his source; in this respect Mada'ini is the most frequently cited authority. According to Sha'ban, Ibn A'tham, being a contemporary of Mada'ini, had the pronounced advantage of quoting this great master in his lifetime.(۱) Comparison of the narratives of Ibn A'tham with the tradition of Mada'ini recorded by Tabari show that Ibn A'tham not only provides a useful check for the material recorded by Tabari, but also adds important details which Tabari has ignored and which are preserved in the Kitab al-Futuh. In the episode of Hasan it is through Ibn A'tham that the complete narrative of Mada'ini has come down to us. This is confirmed by a comparison of Ibn A'tham's account with that of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, who cites Mada'ini as well; the latter ,gives only an abridged version of Hasan's abdication

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Sha'ban, op. cit. Cf. Yaqut, Irshad al-Arib ila ma'rifat al-Adib, ed. D.S. Margoliouth, -۱ (Leiden, ۱۰۰۷-۳۱), I, p. ۳۷۹; C.A. Storey, Persian Literature: a Bio-bibliographical Survey (London, ۱۹۲۷), I, ii, p.۱۲۶۰

but Ibn A'tham has recorded a complete description of the course of events from .Mada'ini

From these three sources we receive the complete texts of the lengthy correspondence between Hasan and Mu'awiya, of which only two letters have been quoted above. There seems to be no reason for doubting the authenticity of these texts. There is a rich literature of correspondence exchanged between important personalities during the classical period of Islam, and this material is frequently quoted in the Arabic sources.(١) The correspondence between Hasan and Mu'awiya must be considered in this light and must be given its due importance. Together with the other sources mentioned above, such literature enables us to form a clearer .picture of the episode than has so far been available

Tabari narrates the events in two independent versions from Zuhri and 'Awana. Zuhri's account seems somewhat to favour the case of Mu'awiya at the expense of Hasan,(٢) or at least glosses over those details which might weaken the position of the founder of the Umayyad caliphate. This is understandable, for Zuhri was closely attached to the Umayyad court and was writing under the successors of Mu'awiya. His account is an unclear isolated report not recorded by other authorities; and in contrast to this, 'Awana's account(٣) appears to have been more balanced in describing the circumstances under which Hasan abdicated. Unlike Zuhri's version, 'Awana's bears considerable historical merit in that it very largely conforms with the .accounts reported by other authorities such as Ya'qubi and Dinawari

,According to Zuhri

See Ali mad Zaki Safwat, Jamharat Rasa'il al-'Arab fi 'usur al- 'Arabiyat az-Zahira -١ (Cairo, ١٩٣٧), a four-volume work in which all the letters from the time of the Prophet .until the end of the 'Abbasid period have been collected with documentation

Tabari, II, pp., f., ۵-۸. See Wellhausen, Arab Kingdom, p.۱۰۷ -۲
Tabari, II, pp.۲-۵ -۳

Hasan was from the very beginning inclined to hand over the caliphate to Mu'awiya in return for the most favourable terms he could secure for himself from his rival. Before his death 'Ali had entrusted the leadership of his forty-thousand-man Iraqi army to Qays b. Sa'd, one of his trusted and zealous supporters, for the campaign against Mu'awiya. Qays was a great enemy of Mu'awiya and the Syrians, and had sworn allegiance to 'Ali to the death. Hasan knew that Qays would never agree to his plans for abdicating in favour of Mu'awiya, and therefore he deposed Qays from the .command of the army and appointed 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas in his place

The Kufans were already suspicious of Hasan's intentions because he had not clearly committed himself to fight against Mu'awiya at the time when homage was paid to the former. Soon they came to the conclusion that Hasan was not the person to lead them against their Syrian enemies, and they became increasingly restless. Not long after Hasan came to be aware of their ill-feelings towards him, he was attacked by a Kufan and sustained a lance wound in his thigh. Unlike all the other accounts, Zuhri specifies neither the place nor the timing of this attack on Hasan, which renders the .whole account still more ambiguous and unclear

After having been attacked, Hasan hastily wrote toMu'awiya that he was renouncing the caliphate on the condition of receiving from him a certain sum of money. As Hasan sent

his envoy to Mu'awiya with his letter, the latter simultaneously dispatched his own envoy to Hasan with a blank sheet of paper, signed and sealed by Mu'awiya, on which Hasan was to inscribe whatever terms for abdication he wanted. The letters crossed. When Mu'awiya received Hasan's letter he was overjoyed to see that the latter had decided to abdicate without much difficulty; he kept Hasan's letter as evidence of this and informed him that he had accepted Hasan's terms. When Hasan received Mu'awiya's carte blanche letter, he added further financial demands on it. Upon

meeting Mu'awiya, perhaps on the occasion of the official transfer of power, he asked the Syrian leader to discard his previous letter and replace it with the carte blanche on .which Hasan had written new terms regarding financial arrangements

Mu'awiya now refused to grant anything further, saying: "Everything you first requested I agreed to and granted to you; my open offer to you cannot any more be binding on me since you have already committed yourself." Hasan therefore could get nothing more from Mu'awiya and was sorry for his hasty action in writing his terms of (abdication.(١

Zuhri also tells us that as soon as 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas noticed that Hasan was negotiating terms of abdication with Mu'awiya, he himself secretly began treating with Mu'awiya for safe conduct and a grant of money for himself. Mu'awiya readily agreed to Ibn 'Abbas' terms, whereupon the latter abandoned the army and moved to Mu'awiya's camp in the darkness

p: ١٩١

.Tabari, II, pp. I, ٥ ff -١

(of night.(١

Hasan's army, finding itself without a leader, again chose Qays as commander on the condition that he carry on the war until the adherents of 'Ali were granted amnesty and security for their lives and property. Qays easily gained these concessions from Mu'awiya, who himself was quite willing to grant such concessions if it would enable him to reach a peaceful settlement and avoid a confrontation with Qays' strong army. He made direct offers to Qays himself, but the latter refused the money that was offered to him by Mu'awiya and, without making any deal for himself, he gave up (resistance on condition of amnesty and security for the Iraqi army.(٢

Zuhri's pragmatism in reporting the events of the abdication of Hasan raises more questions than it answers. This account, which clearly shows minimal resistance on the part of Hasan, must have been circulated by the Umayyads themselves, who, in the absence of the three principles of ijma', nass, and shura by which the previous four caliphs had been nominated, were anxious to find a legal basis for their rule. Hasan's voluntary abdication in favour of Mu'awiya, as Zuhri would have us believe, provides such a legal ground. It was natural that Zuhri in the environment of Umayyad Damascus, should adopt the tradition which must have been most popular and in widest circulation in that city. The events that led to Hasan's abdication do not seem, .however, to have been as simple as Zuhri describes

Awana's account in Tabari(۳) and'

p: ۱۹۲

Tabari, II, pp.۲, ۷ -۱

Tabari, II, pp.۷-۸ -۲

Tabari, II, Pp.۲-۴ -۳

in the other sources named above gives a somewhat different impression of the events and stands in sharp contrast to that of Zuhri. According to 'Awana, Qays did not have command of the whole army during the lifetime of 'Ali, but rather only of the vanguard of ۱۲,۰۰۰ men, over which he continued to retain command when Hasan succeeded his father. At the news of Mu'awiya's advance towards Iraq, Hasan sent Qays with his ۱۲,۰۰۰ troops as an advance guard to check the enemy until Hasan himself could follow with the main force.(۱) According to Ya'qubi, Abu'l-Faraj, and Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, the vanguard of ۱۲,۰۰۰ men was sent by Hasan under the command of 'Ubayd Allah b. al-'Abbas, and along with him were sent Qays b. Sa'd and Sa'id b. Qays (as advisors by whose counsel 'Ubayd Allah was to be guided.(۲

The reason for Hasan's delay in departure seems to have been some lack of enthusiasm on the part of his supporters. This is evident from a report that when he

appealed to the Kufans to march with him against Mu'awiya, there was a poor response. It was only when 'Adi b. Hatim, an old and devoted follower of 'Ali and the chief of the tribe of Tayyi, addressed the Iraqis, urging them to respond to the call of “their Imam, the son of the daughter of their Prophet”,(۳) that they came out to .participate in the war

Soon after, Hasan left Kufa with his main army and reached Al-Mada'in, where

p: ۱۹۳

Tabari, II, p.۲ -۱

Ya'qubi, II, p.۲۱۴; Maqatil, p.۶۲; Sharh, XVI, p.۴۰ -۲

Maqatil, p. ۶۱; Sharh, XVI, p.۳۸ -۳

he encamped in the outskirts of the city. Qays and his vanguard had already reached Maskin, facing Muawiya's army. The Syrian governor tried to bribe Qays by offering him a million dirhams if he would defect from the ranks of Hasan and join him. Qays rejected the offer with contempt, saying: “You want to deceive me in my religion.”(۱) Mu'awiya then made a similar offer to 'Ubayd Allah b. al-'Abbas (or his elder brother 'Abd Allah, as Zuhri reports), who accepted it and went over to him with ۸,۰۰۰ men. Qays was thus left with ۴,۰۰۰ soldiers, waiting for the arrival of Hasan.(۲) 'O We may note here in passing that though 'Ubayd Allah did go over to Mu'awiya before Hasan announced his abdication, the timing of 'Ubayd Allah's defection as given by Ya'qubi does not seem correct. 'Ubayd Allah's defecti۶n must have occurred only shortly .before Hasan's abdication, as will be discussed below

However, while Hasan's vanguard was waiting for his arrival at Maskin, Hasan himself was facing a serious situation at Al-Mada'in. Some of his troops rebelled against him, plundered his tent, and fell upon him. Five different versions of this rebellion are given in the sources. According to 'Awana,(۳) someone suddenly spread the news in the

army of Hasan that Qays had been defeated and slain and that the troops should flee. Hasan's tent was then plundered, and he himself was attacked. If this version is correct, the spreading of the rumour must have been a well-calculated ruse

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Ya'qubi, II, p.۲۱۴ -۱

.ibid -۲

Tabari, II, p.۲ -۳

and an act of espionage by the spies of Mu'awiya, who had, without any doubt, .infiltrated the rank and file of Hasan's army

A second version is given by Ya'qubi,(۱) who reports that as soon as Hasan reached Al-Mada'in, Mu'awiya sent Al-Mughira b. Shu'ba, 'Abd Allah b. 'Amir, and 'Abd ar-Rahman b. Umm al-Hakam to Hasan as his mediators. After they talked to Hasan confidentially, and while leaving his camp, they spread the news that Hasan had agreed to abdicate in favour of Muawiya, whereupon Hasan's soldiers fell upon him and plundered his tent. Ya'qubi also records that Mu'awiya sent his men to Hasan's camp to spread the news that Qays had made peace with Mu'awiya and had come over to his side, while simultaneously he spread the word in the army of Qays that Hasan had made peace with Mu'awiya.'(۲) In this case, again, Mu'awiya's .machinations are responsible for the mutiny in Hasan's army

The third version is given by Dinawari. According to his report, i;۱asan left Kufa for Al-Mada'in, and by the time he reached Sabat, in the outskirts of Al-Mada'in, he had discerned that some of his troops were showing fickleness, lack of purpose, and an indifferent or withdrawn attitude to the war.(۳) Hasan therefore halted at Sabat, :encamped his army there, and made a speech, saying

O people, I do not entertain any feeling of rancour against a Muslim. I am as much an" overseer over yourselves [of your interests] as I am over my own self. Now,

p: ١٩٥

١- Ya'qubi, II, p. ١١٥

٢- ibid.

٣- The Arabic phrase reads .fa lamma intaha ila Sabat raya min ashabihi fashl wa tawakul 'an al-harb.

I am considering a plan; do not oppose me in it. Reconciliation, disliked by some of you, is better [under the circumstances] than the split that some of you prefer, especially when I see that most of you are shrinking from the war and are hesitant to fight. I do not, therefore, consider it wise to impose upon you something which you do not like."(١)

When his people heard this, they looked at each other, reflecting their suspicions. Those among them who were of Kharijite persuasion said: "Hasan has become an infidel (Kafir) as had become his father before him." They suddenly rushed upon him, pulled the carpet from under his feet, and tore his clothes from his shoulder. He called for help from among his faithful followers from the tribes of Rabi'a and Hamdan, who rushed to his assistance and pushed the assailants away from him.(٢)

The fourth version is given by Mada'ini in Ibn Abi'l-Hadid,(٣) who says that while Hasan was on his way to Al-Mada'in he was wounded by a lance at Sabat and his belongings were looted. When word of this reached Mu'awiya, he spread the news far and wide, whereupon the nobles and leaders from among the ١٢,٠٠٠-man vanguard of Hasan egan defecting to Mu'awiya. 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas informed Hasan of the grave situation, and it was at this point that Hasan called the Iraqi leaders of his main army and, with great disappointment, told them of his intention to terminate the

struggle and abdicate. Before

p: ۱۹۶

Dinawari, p.۲۱۶ -۱
.ibid -۲
Sharh, XVI, p.۲۲ -۳

proceeding to the fifth version, it would be appropriate to point out here in passing that according to all four of these versions, Hasan's decision to abdicate was forced .upon him by the circumstances and was not of his own free desire

The fifth version is given by Ibn A'tham and Abu-'l-Faraj,(۱) whose sources are not clear. Ibn A'tham, as noted above, does not often cite his source. At the beginning of his narrative Abu'l-Faraj quotes Abu Mikhnaf along with five other informants; thus it is not clear whether this particular account is taken from Abu Mikhnaf himself or from any one of the other five narrators. According to this version, when Hasan arrived at Al-Mada'in he suddenly halted his army there and made a speech in which he .declared his intention to abdicate

Wordings of the speech, with few variations, are almost the same as that quoted above from Dinawari. After hearing Hasan's speech some of his troops fell upon him, plundered his tent, and tore his clothes. This version, unlike the other four described above, gives no reason for Hasan's decision to deliver his speech at that particular moment at Al-Mada'in and thus renders it rather ambiguous. It also presents serious contradictions and raises many unsolved questions. One would ask, for example, why did Hasan encourage the people and make speeches asking them to join his army for the war against Mu'awiya, as has been quoted earlier from Abu'l-Faraj himself. Why would he go all the way from Kufa to

p: ۱۹۷

Futuh, IV, p.۱۵۴; Maqatil, p.۶۳ -۱

Al-Mada'in with all the necessary preparations for battle, and yet suddenly change his mind and make a declaration of peace at Al-Mada'in? We should therefore accept one of the four previous explanations, of which the most probable is Dinawari's that Hasan's speech and his announcement of his resignation from the office were prompted by the Iraqis' treacherous attitude and finalized by Mu'awiya's successful .use of espionage and diplomacy

After such treatment at the hands of his own troops, the disheartened and shaken Hasan found it impossible to stay in the army camp; he took to his horse and, escorted by his close associates and faithful followers, rode to the safety of the White Castle of Al-Mada'in, the residence of his governor. It was on this road, just before reaching the castle, that a die hard Kharijite, Al-Jarrah b. Sinan al-Asadi, managed to ambush Hasan and wounded him in the thigh with a dagger, shouting: "You have become an infidel (Kafir) like your father before you."(۱) Al-Jarrah was overpowered and killed; Hasan, bleeding profusely, was carried to the castle, where he was cared for by his governor, Sa'd b. Mas'ud ath-Thaqafi. The news of the attack on Hasan, having been spread by Muawiya was soon in wide circulation. This further demoralized the already disheartened troops of Hasan and led to large-scale (desertion from his army.(۲

After describing this, Ya'qubi, Dinawari, and Tabari fail to give a detailed account of further events and hurriedly describe Hasan's abdication, although the first two sources do contain

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Dinawari, p.۲۱۷; Ibn A'tham, IV, p.۱۵۵; Ya'qubi, II, p.۲۱۵; Maqatil, p.۶۴ -۱

.Dinawari, loc. cit.; Ibn A'tham, loc. cit.; Ya'qubi, loc. cit.; Maqatil, loc. cit -۲

a few fragmentary sentences in passing which are of limited value. Keeping in view their method and style, this brevity is understandable. Ibn A'tham and Abu'l-Faraj, however, record for us in detail the events which took place between the incident of the attack on Hasan and his abdication. The accounts of these two, however, vary in .certain points and must be treated separately

According to Ibn A'tham, at the time when Hasan was having these difficulties at Al-Mada'in, Qays b. Sa'd with his ۱۲,۰۰۰-man vanguard was already at Maskin, facing Mu'awiya's army and awaiting Hasan's arrival. When he heard of the attack on Hasan, Qays thought it wise to engage his army in battle with the Syrians so that they should not have a chance to brood over the situation and become further demoralized. An encounter between the two armies took place, resulting in some losses on both sides. Mu'awiya's envoys then came forward and addressed Qays, saying: "For what [cause) are you now fighting with us and killing yourself? We have received unquestionable word that your leader has been deserted by his people and has been stabbed with a dagger and is on the verge of death. You should therefore refrain from fighting until you get the exact information about the situation." Qays was thus forced to stop fighting and had to wait for the official news about the incident from Hasan himself. But by this time troops had begun defecting to Mu'awiya in large numbers. When Qays noticed this

p: ۱۹۹

(large-scale desertion, he wrote to Hasan about the gravity of the situation.(۱

After receiving Qays' letter, Hasan lost heart and immediately called in the Iraqi :leaders and nobles and addressed them in dejection and disgust

O people of Iraq, what should I do with your people who are with me? Here is the" letter of Qays b. Sa'd informing me that even the nobles (ashraf) from among you have gone over to Mu'awiya. By God, what shocking and abominable behaviour on your part! You were the people who forced my father to accept arbitration at Siffin ; and when the arbitration to which he yielded [because of your demand) took place, you turned against him. And when he called upon you to fight Mu'awiya once again, then you showed your slackness and lassitude. After the death of my father, you yourself came to me and paid me homage out of your own desire and wish. I accepted your homage and came out against Mu'awiya; only God knows how much I meant to do [i.e how full of zeal and spirit I was in facing Mu'awiya's challenge). Now you are behaving in the same manner as before [with my father). O People of Iraq, it would be enough for me from you if you would not defame me in my religion, because now I am going to hand over this affair [the caliphate] to Mu'awiya."(٢)

Ya'qubi gives the same reason for Hasan's decision, though, as mentioned above, he covers the matter very briefly.

If this

١- Ibn A'tham, IV, pp.١٥۶ f.

٢- ibid., p. ١٥٧

statement is accepted, it sufficiently explains the whole situation and the circumstances which made Hasan decide in favour of abdication. The statement clearly reflects that Hasan, from the very beginning, even from the time of was suspicious of the unreliable character of the Iraqis. In his judgement they were impulsive people who talked with emotion, but when the time came for action and trial they never stood firm. This fact is not directly mentioned by the sources for the event

of Hasan's abdication, but it appears at the time when his brother Husayn was going to Iraq in response to the Kufan appeal to lead them in rebellion. All those who advised Husayn against responding positively to the Ku fan appeal clearly reminded him how the Iraqis had deserted (khadhalu) his father and brother at the critical moment.(۱) Hasan's feelings are an echo of 'Ali's attitude towards the majority of his Iraqi supporters, a sentiment which he expressed time and again in his speeches .preserved in the Nahj al-Balagha and in many other early sources

After his speech before the leaders of the Iraqis, Hasan immediately sent word to Mu'awiya informing him of his readiness to abdicate. When the news of Hasan's decision reached Qays, he told his associates: "Now you must choose between the two, either to fight without a leader (Imam) or to pay homage to the misled (dalal) :[Mu'awiya]." They replied

Paying homage is easier for us than bloodshed." Thus Qays, along with those who" ,were still with him

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Tabari, II, pp.۲۲۰, ۲۲۳, ۲۷۴; Dinawari, pp.۲۴۳, ۲۹۹; ,Iqd, IV, p.۳۷۶ -۱

left the battlefield at Maskin for Kufa. Surprisingly enough, the name of 'Ubayd Allah b. .al-'Abbas does not appear at all in this account

Turning to Abu'l-Faraj, we are told, as has already been quoted above from Ya'qubi, that the leader of the ۱۲,۰۰۰ man vanguard was 'Ubayd Allah b. al-'Abbas and not Qays b. Sa'd. Both Mu'awiya and 'Ubayd Allah reached Maskin with their armies on the evening of the same day that Hasan reached Al-Mada'in. On the second day, after the morning prayer, while Hasan was confronted with the mutiny of his troops and was wounded, there was at Maskin a brief encounter between Mu'awiya and 'Ubayd Allah.

:When night fell, Mu'awiya sent a message to 'Ubayd Allah, saying

Hasan has informed me of his decision to make peace and hand over the caliphate to" me. If you come under my authority at once, you will be treated as a leader (matbu'); otherwise I will penetrate [into your forces] and then you will be made only a subject (tabi). If you join me now I will pay you one million dirhams, half of which will be paid (immediately, and the second half when I enter Ku fa."(۱

During the night, 'Ubayd Allah secretly slipped through to Mu'awiya's side. In the morning the people assembled, waiting for him to come and lead them in the morning prayer. When, after a search, he was not found, Qays came forward, led the prayer, and then made a fiery speech attacking 'Ubayd Allah, his father

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.Maqatil, pp.۶۴ f -۱

Abbas, and his brother 'Abd Allah for their wavering character and time-serving' policies. Hearing Qays' words, people shouted: "Thanks be to God that he ['Ubayd Allah] has left our ranks; now we will rise and pounce on our enemy," and set off to make an attack. Busr b. Abi Artat, a confidant of Mu'awiya, came forward with ۲۰,۰۰۰ troops and shouted: "Here is your leader ['Ubayd Allah], who has already paid homage [to Mu'awiya], and Hasan has also agreed to make peace. For what, then, are you killing yourselves?" Qays then addressed his people again and asked: "Choose one of the two, either fighting without an Imam or pay a strayed and misled homage [to Mu'awiya]." The people said that they would continue to fight even without an Imam, made a brief attack on the Syrians, and then returned to their bases. When, however, (it became clear that Hasan had agreed to abdicate, they returned to Kufa.(۱

Abu'l-Faraj's rendering of the events between the attack on Hasan and his abdication is important in that it gives a more logical and understandable timing of the defection of 'Ubayd Allah, which was confusingly recorded by other sources. From his account it also becomes clear that of the two brothers, the one who defected was 'Ubayd Allah and not his elder brother 'Abd Allah, whose name appears only in Zuhri's account. However, Abu'l-Faraj's report that the Iraqis replied to Qays that they would continue to fight even without an Imam must be rejected on

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۱- Maqatil, pp.۶۵ ff.

the simple grounds that it is contrary to all other sources, who unanimously report that the troops replied in favour of accepting Mu'awiya.

The terms and conditions on which Hasan abdicated are reported by the sources not of only with major variations, but also with confusion and ambiguity. Ya'qubi and Mas'udi do not mention the terms of peace at all. Tabari mentions three conditions directly, and the fourth indirectly in a different context. The first three conditions were:

۱: that Hasan would retain the five million dirhams then in the treasury of Kufa;

۲ : that Hasan would be allowed the annual revenue from the Persian district of Darabjird;

۳: that 'Ali would not be reviled and cursed, as had been the practice of Mu'awiya since the beginning of 'Ali's caliphate at least not in Hasan's presence.(۱)

The first condition, that Hasan would retain five million dirhams from the treasury of Kufa, makes no sense for two obvious reasons. Firstly, Hasan, until his abdication, was the sole caliph in Kufa, and thus the treasury was already in his possession. Secondly, our sources agree that it was 'Ali's strict practice to empty the treasury at the end of every week. It is thus difficult to believe that within a few months of Hasan's accession,(۲) especially considering the heavy expenditure for war and the unorganized state of the administration (and therefore of tax collection as well) due to 'Ali's sudden death, the treasury of Kufa had become gorged with five million dirhams. It is interesting to note that

p: ۲۰۴

۱- Tabari, II, pp.۳-۴

۲- The shortest period given for his caliphate is three months, the longest is seven months.

after a long gap in which Tabari describes the brutalities of Busr b. Abi Artat in administering Basra, he mentions a fourth condition of abdication. This tells us that "Hasan made peace with Mu'awiya on the condition that all the friends and followers of 'Ali, wherever they might be, would be given amnesty and safe conduct."(۱) As will be seen below, this condition is recorded by other sources in its appropriate place.

In his account of the abdication, Dinawari records for us the following conditions:

۱: that no one from among the people of Iraq will be treated with contempt, and that every one of them will be guaranteed peace and safety no matter what charge or offences might be pending against them;

۲: that Hasan will be entitled to the annual revenue of the district of Ahwaz (instead of Tabari's Darabjird);

۳: that preference should be given to the Hashimites (the 'Alids and the 'Abbasids) over the Banu 'Abd Shams (Umayyads) in the granting of pensions ('ata) and awards.(۲)

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr and Ibn al-Athir, two judicious writers on the lives of the Companions of the Prophet, and some other sources, record yet another two conditions:

۱: that no one from among the people of Medina, the Hijaz, and Iraq will be deprived or dispossessed of anything which they possessed during the caliphate of 'Ali;

۲: that the caliphate would be restored to Hasan after the death of Mu'awiya.(۳)

Abu'l-Faraj, like others, does not seem to be interested in recording the conditions in detail. According to

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۱- Tabari, II, p.۱۳

۲- Dinawari, p. zi۸

۳- Isti'ab, I, pp.۳۵۵ f. Usd al-Ghaba, II, p. ۱۴ adds: "and some other conditions like this." See also Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Sawa'iq al-muhriqa, p.۱۳۴; Al-Imama wa's-siyasa, I, p.۱۴۰

him, Mu'awiya sent 'Abd Allah b. 'Amir and 'Abd ar-Rahman b. Samra as his envoys to

.Hasan to discuss the terms of peace

On behalf of Mu'awiya "they granted the terms of peace to Hasan to which Mu'awiya had agreed: that no one from among the Shi'at 'Ali would be molested, that the name of 'Ali would not be mentioned except in good terms, and some other things which (Hasan wanted.'(١

The most comprehensive account, however, is given by Ibn A'tham,(٢) which must have been taken from Mada'ini, since Ibn Abi'l-Hadid(٣) describes almost the same conditions, quoting Mada'ini as his authority. According to Ibn A'tham, after the incidents at Al-Mada'in and after the statement which Hasan made before the nobles of Iraq, as quoted above, he sent 'Abd Allah b. Nawfal b. al-Harith to Mu'awiya to inform him of Hasan's willingness to abdicate and to discuss the terms of abdication with the Syrian leader on his behalf. The only condition which Hasan stipulated to 'Abd Allah was a general amnesty for the people. 'Abd Allah reached Maskin and told Mu'awiya that Hasan had authorised him to negotiate the conditions of peace on his :behalf, laying down the following terms

;that the caliphate will be restored to Hasan after the death of Mu'awiya : ١

;that Hasan will receive five million dirhams annually from the state treasury :٢

that Hasan will receive the annual revenue of Darabjird; ۴: that the people will be :٣ (guaranteed peace with one another.(۴

Hearing this, Mu'awiya took a blank sheet of

۱- Maqatil, pp. ۶۶ f.; Sharh, XVI, pp.۴۳ f.

۲- Ibn A'tham, IV, pp. ۱۵۸ f.

۳- Sharh, XVI, pp.۲۲ f.

۴- Ibn A'tham, IV, p. ۱۵۸

paper, affixed his signature and seal, and said to 'Abd Allah: "Take this carte blanche to Hasan and ask him to write on it whatever he wants." Mu'awiya asked his associates around him to stand witness to his signature and promise. 'Abd Allah, with the carte blanche and accompanied by some of the nobles of Quraysh, among them 'Abd Allah b. 'Amir, 'Abd ar-Rahman b. Samra, along with some other nobles from among the Syrians, returned to Hasan and told him: "Mu'awiya has agreed to all the conditions I have asked of him for you and which you yourself can write on this blank paper." Hasan replied: "As far as the caliphate is concerned, I am no more interested in it; had I wanted it I would not hand it over to Mu'awiya. As for the money, Mu'awiya cannot make it a condition for me when the [real] issue in question is a matter of concern for the Muslim [community]." Hasan then called his secretary and asked him to write: "These are the terms on which Hasan b. 'Ali b. 'Abi Talib is making peace with Mu'awiya b. Abi Sufyan and handing over to him the state or government of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali:

۱: that Mu'awiya should rule according to the Book of God, the Sunna of the Prophet, and the conduct of the righteous caliphs;

۲: that Mu'awiya will not appoint or nominate anyone to the caliphate after him, but the choice will be left to the shura of the Muslims;

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;that the people will be left in peace wherever they are in the land of God

that the companions and the followers of 'Ali, their lives, properties, their women, :۴ and their children, will be guaranteed safe conduct and peace. This is a solemn agreement and covenant in the name of God, binding Mu'awiya b. Abi Sufyan to keep ;it and fulfil it

that no harm or dangerous act, secretly or openly, will be done to Hasan b. 'Ali, his :۵ brother Husayn, or to anyone from the family of the Prophet (Ahl Bay: an-Nabi; this agreement is witnessed by 'Abd Allah b. Nawfal, 'Umar b. Abi Salama, and so and so."(۱) Ibn A'tham's rendering of the terms of peace as dictated by Hasan solves many problems and explains the different ambiguous accounts of other sources. The timing of the carte blanche sent by Mu'awiya to Hasan was confusing in Tabari, whereas Ibn .A'tham's timing of it makes it understandable

Tabari, Abu'l-Faraj, and some other sources cite the names of 'Abd Allah b. 'Amir and 'Abd ar-Rahman b. Samra as being sent by Mu'awiya as his envoys to Hasan to discuss the terms of peace; Ibn A'tham, while confirming this report, gives the proper and logical occasion of their commission. Ibn A'tham records the conditions in two parts: one laid down by Hasan's envoy 'Abd Allah b. Nawfal, and the other dictated by Hasan himself, as enumerated above. If both sets of conditions are combined together, these, with the exception of the first

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.Ibn A'tham, IV, pp.۱۵۹ f.; Sharh, XVI, pp.۲۲ f -۱

two conditions mentioned immediately above, are the same as those found scattered .in an unorganized way in other sources

The first of these conditions, that Mu'awiya should rule according to the Qur'an, prophetic Sunna, and the conduct of the righteous caliphs, strongly reflects the tendency and spirit of the epoch which was still predominant in the function and character of the office of the caliphate. In all probability, the immediate successor of 'Ali and the Rashidun caliphs would not have handed over the office without expressing this traditional condition, at least outwardly, if we must be so sceptical in accepting such reports. It should be noted, however, that from the time of the Shura, 'Ali, his house, and his supporters always emphasized following only the Sunna of the Prophet and refusing to acknowledge the validity of the Sunna of the first three caliphs. It therefore seems likely that reference to the conduct of the righteous caliphs was added later on in an attempt at reconciliation of the Jama'a as has been seen above. Naturally Hasan could not contradict his own father's stand at the Shura, .where the latter refused to accept the Sunna of Abu Bakr and 'Umar

The second condition–that Mu'awiya would not nominate anyone to the caliphate and would leave the choice to the Shura of the Muslims–should not be difficult for us to accept. The precedent of nominating the successor, only to be endorsed by a few leading personalities, had already been set by Abu Bakr when he appointed

Umar as his successor. The decision of Abu Bakr was, however, dominated by his' sincere concern for the interests of the Muslim community in general, and he did not appoint his son or even a relative to public office. It was not to be so with Mu'awiya and the Umayyads. Thus the imposition of this condition on Mu'awiya by Hasan was a natural corollary of the situation. The condition that the caliphate be restored to Hasan after Mu'awiya's death, reported by many sources, must have been at least

.discussed

From the letter of Mu'awiya quoted above, we may safely deduce that Mu'awiya referred to Hasan's succession after himself as a strong possibility, but without giving any clear undertaking on his own part. Some time later, the Shi'a, gathering together, showed their disapproval of the fact that Hasan had not asked for sufficient guarantees and had not secured an undertaking in writing from Mu'awiya that the .latter would leave him the caliphate after his death

Finally, the most interesting point seems to be Mu'awiya's acceptance of the complete amnesty to all the followers and companions of 'Ali. The acceptance of this particular term proves the falseness of Mu'awiya's stated reason for fighting, which was to avenge the blood of 'Uthman and punish those responsible for his murder. Among the Shi'at 'Ali who were given complete amnesty by Mu'awiya in the terms with Hasan there were men such as 'Amr b. al-Hamiq al-Khuza'I who was said to have been involved in the murder, and

p: ٢١٠

Malik b. al-Ashtar, who was the leader of the rebel contingent of Ku fa. It becomes therefore clear that the reason for the revenge of the blood of 'Uthman was, as has been pointed out elsewhere, a pretext which Mu'awiya used to realize his ambition to .seize the caliphate for himself

The agreement having been concluded, Hasan returned to Kufa, where Qays joined him. Soon afterwards, Mu'awiya entered the city with the full force of his army. A general assembly was held, and different groups of people, one after the other, paid him homage. Our sources give a detailed description of the mixed feelings of the people in accepting as their new ruler. Many of them adopted a timeserving attitude to safeguard their interests; others could not hide their dislike, and even hatred, for

(the Umayyad ruler, but nevertheless had to reconcile themselves with the situation.(۱)

The heated remarks, bitter speeches, and resentful dialogues exchanged among the antagonists from both sides make interesting and informative reading which cannot be dealt with in detail here. The speech of Hasan delivered at the insistence of 'Amr b. al-'As and Mu'awiya is worth noting, however. Though quoted by all the sources, the speech is recorded with different wordings and content. The shortest version is given by Tabari from Zuhri and reads: "O people, God has guided you through our elders [Muhammad and 'Ali] and spared you from the bloodshed through those who followed [referring to himself). Indeed this [the caliphate] is nothing but an

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Ibn A'tham, IV, p. ۱۶۵ -۱

ephemeral thing; these worldly possessionskeep shifting and changing hands. God :said to His Prophet

And I do not know if this may be a trial for you and a grant of [worldly] livelihood to' .(you for a [limited) time."' (Qur'an, ۲۱: ۱۱۱

At this point, Mu'awiya became alarmed and asked Hasan to sit down, reproachfully (asking 'Amr b. al-'As: "Is this what you advised me?"(۱)

Mada'in!, quoted by Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, gives a much longer version of the speech, in which Hasan explains the reasons for his abdication as, besides Mu'awiya's ambitions and rebellion, the unreliable and treacherous attitude of his supporters. Hasan even referred to the time of 'Ali and how the people failed him then.(۲) Another source, :Abu'l-Faraj, quotes only one sentence from Hasan's speech, which reads

The khalifa [successor of the Prophet) is one who dedicates himself to the way of God"

and the Sunna of His Prophet, and not the one who is an oppressor and aggressor; the latter is only a king (malik) who rules a kingdom (mulk), whose enjoyment is little, and whose pleasure is short-lived, leaving behind only a trace of it. I do not know if this is a trial for you and a grant of [worldly] livelihood to you for a [limited] period."(۳) It is interesting to note that if this quotation Is historically correct, it might be the origin of the use of the word mulk (king) instead of khilafa (caliph) for Mu'awiya and his ,successors, used by Muslim historians from the earliest times. However

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Tabari, II, p.۶; Ya'qubi, II, p.۲۱۵ -۱

Hadid, Sharh, XVI, p.۲۸ -۲

.Maqatil, pp.۷۲ f -۳

there are numerous instances where Mu'awiya is recorded as saying, in reference to (himself, "I am the first king in Islam."(۱

The historical accounts of the circumstances facing Hasan from the beginning of his caliphate indicate that his abdication was not motivated by the lure of a life of ease and luxury, as some modern writers would have us believe. The source specify the causes of Hasan's abdication as love of peace, distaste for politics and its dissensions, and the desire to avoid widespread bloodshed among the Muslims. Moreover, he realistically assessed the situation and was fully aware of the disastrous consequences for himself, his family, and his handful of trustworthy followers should he insist on settling the issue by force of arms.(۲) He thus accepted the political realities then prevailing while gaining time for the Shi'i trend of thinking to consolidate its own following on ideological grounds. This is evident from any one of the versions of his speech quoted above on the occasion of the transfer of the caliphate to .Mu'awiya

In spite of his abdication of the caliphate, Hasan continued to be regarded as the leader, or Imam, of the Shi'a after the death of 'Ali. Even those of the Shi'a who criticized his action of abdication never ceased to affirm that he had been designated by his father to succeed him as the Commander of the Faithful. The details of the theory of the imamate were no doubt worked out later on, but the fact remains that as

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Isti'ab, III, p.۱۴۲۰; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidaya Wa'n-Nihaya, VII I, p.۱۳۵ -۱

See, for example, his reply to Hujr that he abdicated to save the lives of his handful -۲ of true followers, in Dinawari, p.۲۲۰

long as Hasan was alive he was considered by both the Shi'a and by all the family members as the head of the house of 'Ali and of the Prophet, and that was enough for .the Shi'a throughout its history to consider him as the second Imam after 'Ali

Hasan's abdication was extremely distasteful to those of the Iraqis who had supported him and his father before him, mainly because of their hatred of Syrian domination. It was equally disturbing to those of the Kharijites who had gathered around Hasan in order to fight against Mu'awiya; it was a Kharijite who furiously attacked Hasan when he heard of his intention to abdicate. There was yet another group, represented by men like Hujr b. 'Adi al-Kindi, which was perturbed by Hasan's decision, but for other reasons. It was this last group that represented the true Shi'at 'Ali at this stage. They were the people who believed that 'Ali and his house were entitled to the caliphate on religious grounds, as opposed to those who supported the .cause of 'Ali and then of Hasan for political or economic considerations

Thus the Shi'at 'Ali, from the time of the Umayyad domination of the provinces under 'Uthman, must be divided into two distinct groups, political and religious. In the civil war between 'Ali and Mu'awiya, these two groups temporarily found themelves united against a common enemy. But when Mu'awiya's overwhelming political and military

power put the outcome of the conflict beyond doubt, the political group

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of Hasan's supporters crumbled and scattered, defecting in swarms to Mu'awiya's side, while the religious supporters remained firm in their belief. They were disappointed by Hasan's action of abdication, but they still remained persistent in their ideals regarding the leadership of the community. They did not lose their identity as an opposition group to the rivals of the house of the Prophet, even after political support for the family of Muhammad had collapsed; and they refused to accept(۱) .what the majority had willingly or unwillingly accepted, as will be seen below

Later on, when the early events of Islam were committed to systematic writing, both Sunni and Shi'i historians and traditionists explained Hasan's action in terms of a .meritorious deed" by which he reconciled the opposing parties

The year of his abdication became known as the 'Am al-Jama'a, the year of the community, and a tradition attributed to the Prophet was reported as saying: "This son of mine is a lord (Sayyid), and he will unite two branches of the Muslims."(۲) This tradition reflects the efforts of the second half of the first and early second centuries when a "central body", or Jama'a, was emerging from a confused situation and thus clearly reflects the tendency by which this "central body" was being formed. The Shi'is thus defended Hasan's action against those extremists who were blaming him for abdication; on the other hand, the Sunnis accepted such an explanation as it :conformed to their needs for a reconciliation between the two opposing groups

p: ۲۱۵

۱- Ibn A'tham, IV, pp.۱۶۴ if.; Maqatil, pp.۶۷ ff.; Ya'qubi, II, pp. ۲۱۶ f.; Dinawari, pp.۲۲۰ f.; .Isti'ab, ۱, pp. ۳۸۷ f

۲- Usd al-Ghaba, II, pp. ۱۳ f.; Isti'ab, I, p.۳۸۴; Bukhari, Sahih, II, p.۱۹۸; Tabari, II, p.۱۹۹; Jahiz., Rasa'il, "Risala fi Bani Umayya," p ۶۵; 'Amili, A'yan, IV, p.۵۴

the party of 'Uthman, now represented by Mu'awiya, and that of 'Ali, now led by his son Hasan. This “central body” later on received the title of the Jama'a (commonly rendered in English as the “orthodox” branch) in Islam, leaving behind and branding as sectarian a body of those who could not and did not agree to reconcile themselves to .this synthesis

Though Hasan prevented a bloody military solution of the conflict by abdicating in favour of Mu'awiya, he did not thereby heal the split in the community. In fact, his abdication had far-reaching consequences for the later development of Shi'ism. Previously he had been, at least nominally, the head of the central body of believers. But now events were developing in the opposite direction, and the 'Uthmaniya branch, with Mu'awiya at its head, became the central body, while the Shi'at 'Ali was reduced to the role of a small opposition party and thus was thrust into a sectarian position. The spokesman for this opposition, however, was not Hasan himself, but .rather Hujr b. 'Adi al-Kindi and his party

Supported by a number of diehard Shi'is of Kufa, he never ceased to protest against Mu'awiya and the official cursing of 'Ali from the pulpits-a policy imposed by Mu'awiya .as a propaganda measure

The nine-year period between Hasan's abdication in ۴۱ /۶۰۰ and his death in ۴۹/۶۶۹ is one in which Shi'i feelings and tendencies were passing through a stage of, so to .speak, fire underground, with no conspicuous activities visible above the surface

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An historical survey of this period for the development of Shi'i deals is very difficult, as our sources are almost silent. Nevertheless, it is not totally free from the occasional voices raised here and there in support of the house of the Prophet and against the rule of Mu'awiya. Now and then we hear of individuals or small groups, mainly from Ku

fa, visiting Hasan and Husayn and asking them to rise in rebellion-a request to which they declined to respond.(١)

The silence of the Shi'is during this period might have been due to two factors. Firstly, the tight grip which Mu'awiya maintained over the empire through his trained and loyal Syrian forces was too strong to allow any rising; and secondly, the Shi'i movement was yet not organized enough to take action against such a formidable power. But it was passing through a natural process of evolution until it could register a widespread support and then translate itself into action.

Mu'awiya was, however, fully aware of strong She sentiments among certain parts of the population of Kufa, and he took various measures to prevent insurrections. Soon after taking control of Kufa, he transferred some of the tribes that were devoted to the house of 'Ali from the city, replaced them with others from Syria, Basra, and Al-Jazira who were loyal to him.(٢)

After his abdication, Hasan left Kufa and settled in Medina, leading a quiet retired life without engaging in politics. His attitude could be understood from the fact that during the

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١- Dinawari, pp.٢٢٠ f.

٢- Tabari, I, p.١٩٢٠

journey back to Medina, at Al-Qadisiya, he received a letter from Mu'awiya asking him to take part in a campaign against a Kharijite revolt which had just erupted. Hasan replied that he had given up fighting against Mu'awiya in order to bring peace to the people, and that he would not take part in a campaign at his side.(١) This passive and withdrawn attitude towards Mu'awiya he maintained while pacifying those of the Shi'is who occasionally visited him and expressed their bitter feelings against the Umayyad ruler.

Hasan did not live long, however. He died in ۴۹/۶۶۹, long before his rival. Mu'awiya took the caliphate from Hasan at the age of ۵۸ and died in ۶۰/۶۸۰ at the age of ۷۷, while Hasan at the time of his abdication was only ۳۸ and died at the age of ۴۵ or ۴۶. This difference in age is very important to note, especially when we read of Mu'awiya's ambitious plans to perpetuate the caliphate in his own house and nominate his son .Yazid as his heir-apparent

This was not possible, because of the terms on which Hasan had abdicated to nor, considering the vast difference in age, could Mu'awiya have hoped that Hasan would die before him. To carry out his plan and fulfil his desire, Mu'awiya had to remove Hasan from the scene. The majority of our sources, both Sunni and Shi'i, historians and traditionists, report that the cause of Hasan's death was poison administered by one of his wives, Ju'da bint

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Baladhuri, Ansab, IVA, p.۱۳۸; Hadid, Sharh, XVI, p.۱۴. Also see Vaglieri, EI۲ article - ۱ "“Hasan

al-Ash'ath.(۱) Mu'awiya is reported to have suborned her with the promise of a large sum of money and of marrying her to his son Yazid. After she had completed the task, Mu'awiya paid her the promised sum of money but refused to marry her to Yazid, (saying that he valued the life of his son.(۲

The overwhelming historical testimony, Mu'awiya's desire to nominate his son as his successor, which he did immediately after Hasan's death, combined with many other clues found in the sources, make it likely that Mu'awiya must have been the instigator of the poisoning, though this will probably never be clearly established. Nevertheless, the fact that the cause of Hasan's death was poison, administered by his wife Ju'da, is .beyond any doubt an historical truth

According to Hasan's own statement, this was the third time he had been poisoned,

and this time it proved fatal. Our sources also tell us that upon receiving the news of Hasan's death, Mu'awiya could not hide his feelings of relief and even joy and passed taunting remarks to Ibn 'Abbas.(۳) Another fact which the sources unanimously record is that soon after Hasan's death, Mu'awiya initiated the process of nominating Yazid as his successor,(۴) as will be seen below. While Mu'awiya took the opportunity of Hasan's death to go ahead with his plans to secure Yazid's nomination to the caliphate, the Shi'is of Kufa, on the other hand, found the occasion appropriate for making another bid to restore the caliphate to the house

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۱- Mas'udi, Muruj, II, pp. ۴۲۶ f.; Maqatil, pp.۷۳ f.; Hadid, Sharh, XVI, pp.۱۰ f., ۱۷; Isti'ab, I, pp. ۳۸۹ f.; Usd al-Ghaba, II, p.۱۴; Ya'qubi, II, p.۲۲۵; Ibn Khallikan, Wafayat, II, p.۶۶

۲- Mas'udi, Muruj, II, p.۴۲۷; Maqatil, p.۷۳; Hadid, Sharh, XVI, p.۱۱

۳- Dinawari, Akhbar, p.۲۲۲; Ya'qubi, II, p.۲۲۵; 'Iqd, IV, p. ۳۶۱; Mas'udi, loc. cit.

۴- Ibn A'tham, IV, pp. ۲۰۶, ۲۲۴ f.; Maqatil, p.۷۳; Ya'qubi, II, p. ۲۲۸; Isti'ab, I, p.۳۹۱

of 'Ali.

As soon as the Shi'is of Kufa heard the news of Hasan's death, they held a meeting in the house of Sulayman b. Surad al-Khuza'i and wrote a long letter to Husayn. In it, after expressing their grief and condolences on the death of “the son of the Wasi, the son of the daughter of the Prophet, and the banner of the guidance”, they invited Husayn to rise against Mu'awiya and assured him that they would be ready to sacrifice their lives in his cause. Husayn, however, honouring his brother's treaty with Mu'awiya, refused to respond and advised them to refrain from agitation and to stay calm in their houses as long as Muawiya was alive.(۱)

The most enthusiastic among the Shi'is, however, could no longer remain idle. Hujr b. 'Adi al-Kindi and his associates, who had never compromised their Shi'i ideals, now came out in open revolt against Mu'awiya and his lieutenant Ziyad b. Abi Sufyan, who governed both Kufa and Basra after the death of the governor of Kufa, Al-Mughira b.

Shu'ba, in ۵۱/۶۷۱. The revolt is reported in great detail by the early sources and demonstrates the strong Shi'i feelings of the movement as it re-emerged at this stage. Even though it was of hardly any consequence or significance militarily, the fact that many early works devote long chapters to Hujr(۲) indicates that the episode was .of not insignificant proportions in the revolutionary events of early Islam

We are told that these die-hard Shi'is had been consistently

Ya'qubi, II, p.۲۲۸; Dinawari, p.۲۲۱ -۱

See Tabari, II, pp.۲۲۳-۵; Baladhuri, IVA, pp.۲۱۱-۳۶; Aghani; XVI I, pp.۷۸-۹۶; Dinawari, -۲ pp. ۲۲۳-۵ ; Isti'ab, I, pp.۳۲۹-۳۳

protesting not only against the cursing of 'Ali, but also against the rule of Mu'awiya, whom they considered a usurper of the rights of the house of 'Ali to the caliphate. Their slogan was that "the caliphate is not valid and permissible except in the family of Abu Turab." (۱) While Ziyad himself was in Basra, and Kufa was being administered by his deputy 'Amr b. Hurayth, they repeatedly went to the mosque and publicly denounced Mu'awiya and Ziyad. When 'Amr tried to warn them, during one of the Friday sermons, of the consequences of this open rebellion, they stoned him and forced him to take refuge in the governor's palace.(۲) The numerical strength of those who thus demonstrated their support for the Shi'i cause can be judged from the report that "they used to occupy half of the mosque of Kufa."(۳) It may be noted that .the mosque of Kufa had the capacity of accommodating as many as ۴۰,۰۰۰ people

Informed by his deputy of the alarming situation, Ziyad rushed back to Kufa. The governor first sent some Yemeni tribal leaders of Shi'i inclination, with whom he had managed to establish a modus vivendi, to warn Hujr of the dangerous path he was following. The sources bear enough testimony that from the time Ziyad took over the

governorship of Kufa in ۵۱/۶۷۱ he tried his best to win over Hujr. Ziyad had already offered him a seat in his administrative council and was willing to enhance Hujr's position in the tribe

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Tabari, ۱۱, p. ۱۳۱; Dinawari, Pp. ۲۲۳ f.; Aghani; XVII, PP.۷۹ f -۱

Aghani; XVI I, p. ۸۱; Baladhuri, IVA, p.۲۱۴ -۲

Aghani; XVII, p. ۸۱; Baladhuri, IVA, p.۲۱۴ -۳

.of Kinda

Nothing could change the latter's attitude, however. Indeed, if the problem is regarded as one of a political nature, then it must be pointed out that almost all political concessions and material rewards had already been offered by the governor to satisfy Hujr. Furthermore, his refusal to accept any of the concessions which the governor was rather generously offering him could not possibly have involved an aspiration for further personal power on Hujr's part. He was simply too old. Even if he had succeeded in bringing the Shi'a to power by making Husayn caliph, his position would not have been any better than it had been during 'Ali's time. Such personal gains had already been offered to him by Ziyad, but he totally refused them. In the final analysis, we are left with no choice but to accept that Hujr's only motive was his .religious conviction and his unshakable faith in the leadership of the Ahl al-Bayt

The tribal leaders, some of them old friends of Hujr, who were sent to him to mediate and seek a compromise, failed in their efforts, but nevertheless asked the governor to treat him leniently.(۱) This indicates the deep respect and high regard in which Hujr was held by them. One could hardly expect tribal leaders to defend a power-thirsty politically motivated self-seeker and troublemaker who might challenge or undermine their own leadership. They would, on the other hand, defend a man whose deeper religious convictions agreed with their own and who had

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Ibn Sa'd, VI, p.۲۱۹ -۱

.greater moral courage to stand by his principles

Ziyad, however, refused to listen to their pleas for Hujr and sent out his police to arrest him, but Hujr's active supporters were numerous enough to repulse them. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, Ziyad immediately summoned the nobles and leaders, especially those of the Yemeni tribes, and addressed them, saying that it was their people who 'were helping Hujr, and if they did not withdraw their support from him Ziyad would call in the Syrian forces for a complete crackdown. A phrase of Ziyad's address quoted by the sources is most illustrative of the character and attitude of these tribal leaders of Ku fa. According to Tabari, Ziyad said: "Your bodies are with me, but your affection and passions are with Hujr."(۱)

Abu'l-Faraj quotes a rather elaborate statement which reads: "Your bodies are with me, but your passions are with this foolish man surrounded by flies [i.e., by people who, like flies, gather around any object]; you are with me, but your brothers, sons, and your clansmen are with Hujr."(۲)

Afraid of losing their positions, the tribal leaders of Kufa once again demonstrated their characteristic weakness and persuaded their respective clansmen not to expose themselves to Syrian arms. While the majority of those who had gathered around Hujr finally deserted him, there was still a sizeable group who refused to leave and resisted Hujr's arrest. Ziyad had to call in the regular army, specifically choosing troops from the Yemeni contingent in Kufa, to

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Tabari, II, p.۱۱۷; Baladhuri; IVA, p.۲۱۴ -۱

Aghani; XVII, p.۸۲ -۲

.deal with the situation

The task was not so easy, however, not only because of the personal prestige and the widespread support Hujr enjoyed among the Ku fan masses, but also because of the fear of tribal complications. A skilled politician with extraordinary abilities in dealing with rebellions, Ziyad tactfully managed to involve in the operations the Yemeni tribes to whom Hujr himself belonged. In this way Ziyad avoided the greater danger of a serious conflict between the Nizari and the Yemeni groups of the tribes. Among the Yemeni tribes themselves, he played one off against the other and terrorized the members and nobles of Kinda, Hujr's own tribe, threatening them with death and the destruction of their property if they did not hand over Hujr to him. The lengthy account of the episode given by Abu Mikhnaf and other early authorities, as recorded by Tabari and Abu'l-Faraj, is interesting in many ways. It reveals how the personal interests of the tribal leaders were exploited to make them act against their own religious aspirations, how tribal rivalries were played off against each other, how the supporters of Hujr were coerced, and how ultimately Ziyad succeeded in arresting one of the most respected leaders of the Shi'is of Kufa and in suppressing a deep-.rooted movement

Besides Hujr, thirteen other prominent Shi'is were rounded up and arrested.(۱) The tribal affiliations of the fourteen men arrested break down as follows: Kinda, two; Hadramawt, one; 'Abs, two; Khath'am, one; Bajila, two; Rabi'a, one; Hamdan, one; ,Tamim

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See Tabari, II, pp. ۱۱۷ ff; ۱۳۶ -۱

three; and Hawazin, one. It is interesting to note that of these fourteen, eight were

from various Yemeni tribes Kinda, Hadramawt, Khath'am, Bajila, and Hamdan-and six were from the Nizari tribes of the North-'Abs, Rabi'a, Tamim, and Hawazin. This shows the dimension of the movement and indicates that the Shi'I feelings in Kufa .were not strictly confined to the Yemenis

Ziyad decided to dispatch his captives to Syria to he dealt with by Mu'awiya. Along with them he had to send an indictment duly attested to by the people. He therefore called in the four heads of the four administrative divisions of the Kufan population.(۱) :These leaders spelled out the charges against Hujr as follows

;Hujr gathers the crowds around himself and openly reviles and curses the caliph" :۱

;He exhorts people to fight against the Amir al-Mu'minin :۲

;He caused disturbances in the city and ousted the caliph's governor :۳

He believes in and propagates the claim that the caliphate is not valid except in the :۴ ;family of Abu Talib

He preaches that Abu Turab ('Ali) was completely free of all blame, he praises him, :۵ ;and he urges people to love and respect him

He calls for secession from and denunciation of the enemies of 'Ali and all those who :۶

;fought against him

And those of the persons who are with him are the leaders of his followers and are :۷ (of a similar opinion."(۲

The charges spelled out in this document against Hujr by the four chiefs of Kufa were no doubt accurate and

p: ۲۲۵

After assuming control of Kufa, Ziyad regrouped the entire population into four - ۱ administrative quarters and appointed a head of his own choosing in charge of each quarter. This has been discussed in chapter ۵ in connection with the general .assessment of the situation in Kufa

Tabari, II, p.۱۳۱; Aghani; XVII, p.۸۹ -۲

representative of the thinking, feelings, and activities of Hujr and his associates. This document, which appears to have been preserved without any attempts to falsify or suppress its content, gives us perhaps the clearest picture of the Shi'I religious position at the time of Hujr, their feelings and aspirations, their love for the house of .'Ali, and their resentment against Mu'awiya as a usurper

Ziyad did not like the indictment, however. The reason, so clearly recorded by the sources, is very important to note as it sheds light on the real situation. As Ziyad said after examining the document: "I do not think this indictment is conclusive enough; I want the attestations of more witnesses than just these four chieftains to be affixed (to it."(۱

The charges laid down in the original document dealt almost exclusively with Hujr's

Shi'i cause and his love for the house of 'Ali. Ziyad considered that not very many Yemenis, whom he particularly wanted to bear witness to the charges, would be willing to sign, on the grounds of Hujr's activities in the cause of Shi'I ideals. Most of the Yemenis were of Shi'i inclination, with of course varying degrees of practical commitment. Moreover, it seems, Ziyad was hesitant to inform Mu'awiya officially that Shi'i feelings and activities were so strong and were being so openly demonstrated in Kufa while Ziyad was the governor of the province. It was indeed a unique privilege for him to hold the governorships of both Kufa and Basra simultaneously, an

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۱- Tabari, loc. cit.; Aghani loc. cit.

honour no official had ever before enjoyed.

Consequently, another indictment was prepared, laying down the following charges:

۱: "Hujr b. 'Adi has cast off his allegiance to the Caliph;

۲: He has caused a schism in the community;

۳: He curses the Caliph;

۴: He calls for war and has created discord;

۵: He gathers the people around him and exhorts them to break off allegiance to the

;Amir al-Mu'minin and remove him from office

(He disbelieves in God."(١) :۶

The marked difference between the two documents is clear enough. While the charges laid down in the first indictment centred on Hujr's activities and open rebellion for the Shi'I cause, the second stressed his rebellion against the state and the authority of Mu'awiya, with no reference to the Shi'I movement. The first document places much emphasis on Hujr's unshakable love for 'Ali and devotion to his family on religious grounds; the second replaces this charge with an accusation that Hujr disbelieved in God, which according to the precedent set by Abu Bakr provided firm grounds for execution. All the evidence at our disposal leaves us in no doubt that the charges listed in the first document are authentic, whereas the second indictment .is a revision fabricated for the reasons elaborated above

This explains the reports that Mu'awiya was hesitant to accept the indictment and reluctant to take drastic action against Hujr. Moreover, as will be seen below, the only condition given by Mu'awiya for the Shi'i leaders to save their lives was that they must curse and denounce

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Tabari, II, p.١٣٢; Aghani; loc. cit.; Baladhuri, IVA, p.٢٢١ -١

Ali. This also indicates that their main offence was their pro-Shi'i activity and not' .crimes against the state and Caliph as presented in the second indictment

It hardly need be said that Hujr was unmistakably held by the Kufans as a die-hard and uncompromising Shi'i leader. Re was also considered an extremely pious Muslim.

To this fact even those who did not share his Shi'i views bore testimony. The Qadi Shurayh b. Harith wrote to Mu'awiya, saying: "I bear witness that Hujr is a pious Muslim, steadfast in prayer; he gives alms, observes the fast in the month of Ramadan, and always performs the hajj and 'Umra... and he indeed commands a high place in Islam."(۱)

Nevertheless, Ziyad called the people to attest to the authenticity of the indictment. Seventy people, of whose names forty-five are specifically recorded, are reported to have signed the document.(۲) Some of these signatures were certainly forged, as is commonly indicated by the sources listing these names. Qadi Shurayh protested in his letter to Mu'awiya that he never signed the document and that his name had been added without his knowledge. Some others apologized later for signing, indicating that Ziyad had put pressure on them to attest to the charges.(۳)

When the prisoners reached Mu'awiya, there was strong pressure on him from the various tribes to release their respective clansmen. Seven of the fourteen prisoners were freed through the efforts and influence of their relatives. Hujr and the other six were given a chance to save their lives

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۱- Baladhuri, IVA, pp.۲۲۲ f.; Tabari, II, p.۱۳۷

۲- Tabari, II, pp.۱۳۳ ff; also, with some variations, Baladhuri, IVA, Pp.۲۲۱ ff; Aghani; XVII, pp.۸۹ ff

۳- See sources cited in note ۹۵ above

if they would publicly curse and denounce 'Ali. Mu'awiya's executioners told them: "We are commanded to give you a chance to save yourselves by denouncing 'Ali and cursing him; if you refuse to do this we will kill you." Hujr and the other six with him steadfastly replied : "By God, we will never do this." They were thereupon

beheaded.(1)

That these men would sacrifice their lives rather than denounce 'Ali is a matter that cannot be taken lightly: there must have been a meaning to it much deeper than the level of political interests. The history of religion is full of men who have died rather than compromise their faith, and the history of man cannot be explained only in political and economic terms. To read history only in material terms is indeed a regrettable phenomenon of modern historiography. On the other hand, to accept religious consciousness in one case and deny it in another, though the circumstances are similar, is an equally regrettable example of prejudice.

No doubt, in most cases popular movements in human society are dominated by political or economic factors, yet there is no dearth of instances where individual conscience has gone far beyond these considerations. Hujr was certainly one of these examples. Not only was he given the opportunity to save his life, but he was also offered by Ziyad both political power and economic advantages. He refused. To him, achieving these through denouncing and cursing 'Ali meant the denunciation of the faith itself. There

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۱- Tabari; II, p. ۱۴۰; Aghani; XVII, pp.۹۲ f.; Baladhuri, IVA, p.۲۲۴

are political implications to this episode only insofar as political considerations were ancillary to religious objectives. Thus Hujr's concern with who should be the caliph was not a political or economic question: he believed in and was prepared to die for, as he did, the idea of special qualities being granted by God to the family of the Prophet, making them specially suited to rule.

Hujr and his companions must therefore be considered as representative of those

first Shi'is who voiced their religious opinion in support of 'Ali immediately after the death of the Prophet, and they were the forerunners of a progressively developing .movement soon to be crystallized as a full-fledged section of the Muslim community

He was a distinguished companion of the Prophet, widely respected for his piety and devotion to religious practices, even though a great partisan of 'Ali. His tragic fate sent a wave of grief and shock through the holy cities. Even the Prophet's widow 'A'isha and 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar vehemently protested against his execution.(۱) It is interesting to note that the tragedy of Hujr initiated the martyrology of the Shi'a, and his death .was lamented in numerous elegies that developed into a rich literature in Shi'i Islam

Naturally, the tragedy affected the Kufans most Their sentiments were stirred up with a deep sense of calamity and produced serious reactions. They sent a delegation to Husayn at Medina and urged him to lead an armed revolt against Mu'awiya. Husayn turned down the request with the

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۱- Tabari, II, p.۱۴۵; Isti'ab, I, p.۲۲۹ f.; Baladhuri; IVA, pp.۲۲, ۲۲۸, ۲۲۹ ff

same advice as before.(۱) Mu'awiya was not unaware of these overtures to Husayn and was alarmed by such activities, especially when he received a letter from his governor in Medina, Marwan b. al-Hakam, warning that the delegation sent from Kufa was staying in Medina and having frequent meetings with Husayn. The Caliph wrote a threatening letter to Husayn as a warning, but the latter maintained in his reply the same indifferent attitude towards the existing order and assured Mu'awiya that he would continue to honour the treaty of his brother.(۲)

Except for the revolt of Hujr, suppressed by rather severe measures, the period between the deaths of Hasan and of Mu'awiya is again a quiet and subdued one in the history of the Shi'i movement. The general impression which we get from the sources is of an atmosphere of fear and caution on both sides. Mu'awiya's apprehensive

attitude towards the potential of a Shi'i uprising is demonstrated by his extreme measures against Hujr and his limited, but quite serious, revolt. The fact that Mu'awiya, well known for his shrewd diplomacy in achieving his goals, should act in such a violent manner against Hujr indicates his uncompromising attitude towards Shi'i sympathies, an attitude perhaps resulting from fear of the deep-rooted Shi'i .movement, especially in Kufa where the group was strongest

On the other hand, Husayn's repeated refusal to lead the Kufan enthusiasts in open revolt reveals his own cautious attitude and desire to avoid giving Mu'awiya any excuse to completely annihilate the

p: ۲۳۱

Dinawari; p.۲۲۴ -۱
.ibid -۲

supporters of the house of 'Ali. Throughout this period, Mu'awiya seems to have been trying to destroy, at the slightest pretext, those of 'Ali's followers who could not be bought or intimidated into submission; until this could be accomplished, the Umayyad .hold on the caliphate would remain insecure

It is not unlikely that one of the reasons for the imposition of cursing 'Ali from the pulpits was to provoke the Shi'I sympathizers into open revolt and thus subject them to attack and destruction at the hands of the Umayyad forces. When Al-Mughira b. Shu'ba was appointed governor of Kufa in ۴۱/۶۶۱, one of the duties specified to him by Mu'awiya was that he should vigorously carry out the cursing of 'AlI, propagandize against him and his followers, increase the intensity of the campaign to disgrace, dishonour, and impugn the character of 'Ali and his followers, and finally popularize .and propagate the virtues of 'Uthman and his supporters

The same instructions were given to Ziyad b. Abi Sufyan when he was entrusted with the governorship of Kufa after the death of Mughira in ۵۰/۶۷۰.(۱) Both of these

governors carried out these duties to the satisfaction of Mu'awiya. Hujr and a few others could not tolerate this continuous provocation and fell into the trap, while others remained cautious and careful. Husayn, on his part, fully understanding the situation, wisely avoided any provocation against Mu'awiya and waited for an appropriate opportunity to move into action. In this way, he saved himself and his party

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.Tabari, II, pp. ۱۱۱ f.; Baladhuri, IVA, pp. ۲۱۱ f -۱

from severe repression on the one hand, and honoured his brother's treaty, which .indirectly involved Husayn as well, on the other

Perhaps the most important event in the history of the development of the Shi'i “Passion” was Mu'awiya's nomination of his son Yazid to succeed him. The Caliph could not act in this direction as long as Hasan lived, and it is significant that immediately after the news of Hasan's death, Mu'awiya began actively working on the project that would fulfil his desire of perpetuating the rule of his family. This was no easy task, and the Caliph had to move with great caution and use all those devices characteristic of his rule: diplomacy, generous gifts, bribes, and finally threats and oppression. It is not our intention here to go into the details of how Mu'awiya succeeded in buying off the leaders of the tribes and silencing the more resolute with severe repression. These details are preserved in the sources with hardly any serious differences. It will suffice for our purpose here to note that after careful arrangements through his governors, Mu'awiya managed to bring together from most of the provinces deputations which, as planned, declared their allegiance to (Yazid as heir-apparent.(۱

It was different with the Hijaz, where there lived the elite of Islamic nobility and the

sons of the most prominent Companions of the Prophet, most important among them being Husayn b. 'Ali, 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar, 'Abd Allah b. az-Zubayr, and 'Abd ar-Rahman b. Abi Bakr. Any delegation from

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.For details, see Tabari under the years ۵۶ to ۶o; also Mas'udi, Muruj; III, pp.۲۷ f -۱

Medina without them would have been meaningless, thus their refusal to co-operate was of the utmost gravity. Mu'awiya therefore went to Medina in person with ۱,۰۰۰ .selected horsemen to deal with the recalcitrants

According to one version, Mu'awiya, reaching Medina and calling these four to meet him in the outskirts, treated them in such a harsh manner that they fled to Mecca. This worked as planned, and in their absence Mu'awiya declared the nomination of Yazid; this was approved by his supporters, while others had not the courage to resist. The problem of Medina solved, Mu'awiya proceeded to Mecca. There he changed his attitude and first tried to win over these four by treating them with exceptional friendliness. After spending quite some time with them and showing his great affection and regard for them, just before he was about to set out on his return home, .he expressed his desire for their support for Yazid

Re explained that he was not demanding much from them, that Yazid would be ruler only in name, and that, under Yazid's name, it would in fact be they who would have real control of the government. After a spell of silence, Ibn az-Zubayr spoke and, in the name of all, he rejected the Caliph's suggestion. The enraged Mu'awiya said : "On other occasions, when I speak in the pulpit, I allow anyone to object to my speech if he so wishes; but he who contradicts me today, a sword will silence him." Then he entered

the mosque of Mecca, taking his four opponents with him, and declared: "These four men, without whom no decision concerning the succession can be made, have agreed to Yazid's nomination; so now none of you people should have any difficulty in doing the same." Thereupon people did homage to Yazid, while the four remained silent out of fear.(١) Even if this version is cautiously regarded as a later elaboration, Mu'awiya's going to the Hijaz for the purpose of trying to compel these persons not to oppose (Yazid cannot be denied.(٢

Chapter ٧: The Martyrdom of Husayn

On Mu'awiya death, his son Yazid assumed the caliphate in accordance with the former's unprecedented testament in Rajab ٦٠/March ٦٨٠. A true representative of the way of life common among the pre-Islamic youth of the Umayyad aristocracy, Yazid .commanded no respect in the community

His anti-Islamic behaviour and openly irreligious practices were well known throughout the Muslim world and earned for him contempt and disfavour, especially among those who cared for religion. Even those few writers who attempt to hush up some of the information unfavourable to the Umayyad house could not refrain from reporting that Yazid was the first among the caliphs to drink wine in public and that he sought out the Worst company, spending much of his time in the pleasures of music and singing and amusing himself with apes and hunting-hounds. He himself had no use for religion, nor had he any regard for the religious sentiments of others. Addicted ,to wine-bibbing, attracted to singing-girls

For details see Ibn A'tham, IV, pp.۲۳۵-۴۹; Ibn Athir, Al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh, (Beirut, ۱۹۶۵)۱۱۱, pp. ۵۰۸-۱۱ -۱

.See references quoted above in notes ۱۰۳ and ۱۰۴ and also Tabari, II, pp. ۱۷۵ f -۲

and exposed to all sorts of vices, Yazid has never been presented in good terms by any Muslim writer of any period or by any school of thought.(۱) His open and persistent violations of Islamic norms were still more shocking to the community because of his close proximity to the Prophet and the Rashidun caliphs, of whom he claimed to be the successor and from whose authority he derived his title. Nevertheless, Mu'awiya's meticulous arrangements, coupled with his formidable military grip on the Muslim world, ensured the smooth succession of his son. Yazid was thus hailed as the "Commander of the Faithful" by all the tribes and the provinces; yet his title was not secure until he could receive homage from the four most notable personalities of Islam, whom Mu'awiya, in spite of his utmost efforts, could neither buy nor coerce as he had done with all other men of prominence and the .chiefs of the tribes

With the death of Mu'awiya the last of the first generation who could claim for himself at least some political importance, the caliphate had to pass on to the second generation (tabi'un) after the Prophet. The grandees of this generation, as has been described in the preceding chapter, were Husayn b. 'Ali, 'Abd Allah b. az-Zubayr, 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar, and 'Abd ar- Rahman b. Abi Bakr, the sons of the most prominent Companions of the Prophet who were held in great respect by the community; Husayn, also being the only surviving grandson of

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For the character and conduct of Yazid, see Jahiz, Rasa'il, "Risala fi Bani Umayya", pp.۲۹۴ ff.; Baladhuri, IVB, pp. ۱-۱۱; Aghani; XV, p.۲۳۲; Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p.۶۷; Damiri, Hayat al- Hayawan, pp. ۲۶۱ ff.; Ya'qubi, II, p.۲۲۸. It is indeed surprising to note that Henri Lammens, in his Le califat de Yazid, contrary to the unanimous reports of -۱

Muslim writers of all times, has taken great pains to depict Yazid as an ideal character. Lammens' unusual regard for the Umayyad house often led him to read the Arabic .text to suit his own purposes

the Prophet, enjoyed greater regard than the other three. It was therefore obvious that without their recognition Yazid's authority could not be firmly consolidated, was fully aware of the importance of these four, and having failed to secure their agreement to Yazid's succession, he warned his son of the danger before he :breathed his last. On his deathbed Mu'awiya advised Yazid

O my son, I have arranged everything for you, and I have made all the Arabs agree" to obey you. No one will now oppose you in your title to the caliphate, but I am very much afraid of Husayn b. 'Ali, 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar, 'Abd ar-Rahman b. Abi Bakr, and 'Abd Allah b. az-Zubayr. Among them Husayn b. 'Ali commands great love and respect because of his superior rights and close relationship to the Prophet. I do not think that the people of Iraq will abandon him until they have risen in rebellion for him against you. As far as is possible, try to deal with him gently. But the man who will attack you with full force, like a lion attacks his prey, and who will pounce upon you, like a fox .when it finds an opportunity to pounce, is 'Abd Allah b. az-Zubayr

(Whenever you get a chance, cut him into pieces."(١)

Mu'awiya's advice, commonly reported by many sources, confirms the reports that Mu'awiya's efforts to secure the approval of these grandees of Islam for Yazid's .succession had not been successful

In order to secure undisputed possession of the

۱- Baladhuri, IVB, pp.۱۲۲ f.; 'Iqd, IV, p.۲۲۶; Tabari, II, pp.۱۹۶ f.; Dinawari, p.۲۲۶

caliphate, the first task Yazid undertook was to order the governor of Medina, Al-Walid b. 'Utba, to exact homage from the refractory, especially from Husayn and Ibn az-Zubayr. In his letter to the governor, he gave strict orders that they should not be allowed to delay, and if they refused, that Walid should behead them at once. Some sources include the name of Ibn 'Umar as also having been specifically mentioned in this letter.(۱) Walid b. 'Utba accordingly sent for Husayn and Ibn az-Zubayr at an unusual hour of the night to oblige them to pay homage to the new caliph. Both of them realized that Mu'awiya was dead, and both had decided to stand by their refusal to pay homage to Yazid. Ibn az-Zubayr did not go to the palace and fled to Mecca the following night. Husayn went to see the governor, but was accompanied by a strong band of his supporters in case of a serious confrontation. Leaving his supporters at the gate, Husayn went into the palace alone. Walid read to him Yazid's letter and asked for immediate recognition of the new caliph. Husayn replied uncommittedly that the bay'a, in order to be valid, must be made in public and that the governor should arrange a public gathering in the mosque where he would also be present.

With this reply, when Husayn rose to leave the palace, Marwan b. al-Hakam, who was present there as well, rebuked the governor, saying: “By God, if you allow Husayn to

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۱- Baladhuri, IVB, p.۱۲; Ya'qubi, II, p.۲۴۱; Tabari, II, p. ۲۱۶; 'Iqd IV, p.۲۲۷; Bidaya, VIII, pp.۱۴۶ f.

leave without paying the homage now, you will never be able to get it from him; so arrest him and do not free him until he pays the homage, or behead him.” In fact, Marwan had already advised Walid to call these two for the bay'a, and if they refused, Mu'awiya kill them at once before the news of Mu'awiya's death became known to the

people. Walid, however, did not accept this advice: as Husayn left the palace, the :former retorted to Marwan's harsh attitude, saying

Do not reproach me for this, O Marwan. You have advised me to do something in“ which there lies complete destruction and the ruin of my religion. By God, if the entire .wealth and treasures of the whole world were given to me I would not kill Husayn

Should I kill him only because he refuses to pay homage,I would suffer total destruction on the Day of Judgement, for in the sight of God there cannot be anything (more accountable than the blood of Husayn.”(١

The reply of Walid to Marwan, so commonly recorded by the sources, reflects that particular regard and respect with which the grandson of the Prophet was held not .only by his followers, but by a great number of Muslims in general

Husayn, however, succeeded in avoiding the demand for the Bay'a for two days and finally escaped at night with his family and most of the Hashimites to Mecca. Walid b. :'Utba paid for his lenient attitude towards the grandson of the Prophet

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Tabari, II, p.٢١٩; Baladhuri, IVB, p. ١۵; Dinawari, p.٢٢٨; Bidaya, VIII, p.١۴٧ -١

.he was shortly thereafter dismissed from his post as governor of Medina

Ibn az-Zubayr, who reached Mecca before Husayn, had gathered people around him

against Yazid, and he is reported to have been harbouring secret ambitions for the caliphate himself. But as soon as Husayn arrived in the city, the people abandoned Ibn .az-Zubayr and gathered around Husayn

This was only natural, for our sources clearly state that "Husayn was much dearer and far more respected by the people of the Hijaz than Ibn az-Zubayr, who knew that the people there would never follow him as long as Husayn was in Mecca."(١) So great were the inclinations of the people to Husayn that after his arrival there people prayed with him, performed the tawaf of the Ka'ba with him, and preferred to stay .around him most of the time

Husayn, like his brother Hasan, combined in his person the right of descent both from the Prophet and from 'Ali; and now after the death of Hasan he was the only candidate from the Prophet's family. But in the preceding years he had done very little to support his rights, restricting himself to a negative attitude towards Yazid's nomination. Nor, due to Hasan's treaty with Mu'awiya, was it possible for him to act as long as Mu'awiya was alive. This he explained to the Shi'is of Kufa whenever they approached him concerning an uprising. The death of Mu'awiya changed the situation. On the one hand, Husayn was now free from the treaty obligations of

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١- See Tabari, II, pp.٢٣٣, ٢٧۶; Baladhuri, IVB, p.١٣; Dinawari, p.٢٢٩; Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p. ۵۵ Bidaya, VIII, p. ١۵١

his brother and, on the other, the demand for active guidance and leadership from the Shi'is of Kufa became increasingly pressing. As soon as this group received word of Mu'awiya death, they held a series of meetings expressing their renewed and enthusiastic support for Husayn. They sent out numerous letters and a succession of messengers urging Husayn to come to Kufa to take their leadership, as they had no

Imam other than him. The first letter Husayn received on ۱۰ Ramadan ۶۰/۱۵ June ۶۸۰; it was signed by Sulayman b. Surad al-Khuza'i, Al-Musayyab b. Najaba, Rifa'a b. Shaddad, Habib b. al-Muzahir, and Muslim b. Awsaja in the name of the Shi'is and :Muslims of Kufa, and read

We thank God for casting down the tyrannical rule of your enemy, who had usurped" the power to rule this community with out any right, allowed the possession of God to pass into the hands of the powerful and the rich, and killed the best men [an allusion to Hujr b. 'Adi and his supporters] while allowing the worst of the people to remain alive. We invite you to come to Kufa, as we have no Imam to guide us; and we hope that through you God will unite us on the path truth. We do not go to Friday congregational prayers to pray with Nu'man b. Bashir, the governor of Kufa, nor do we assemble with him at the occasion of the 'Id. If we hear that you are coming to us, we

(will oust the governor from our city. Peace and mercy of God be upon you."(۱

This letter, signed by the men named above, must have served as a major incentive to Husayn, for the signatories had been trusted followers of his house from the very beginning and had proven their loyalty at the battles of Al-Jamal and Siffin with 'Ali. Though they had been extremely perturbed and disappointed by Hasan's abdication in favour of Mu'awiya, they nevertheless remained loyal to the former and hostile to the latter. Apart from these early Shi'is, a great number of other Kufans also wrote (letters to Husayn, each signed by numerous individuals for the same purpose.(۲

Similar letters urging Husayn to assume active leadership were also sent by the Shi'is of Basra. Not all of them, however, had the same degree of religious motivation: some

.had political aspirations, hoping to throw off the yoke of Syrian domination

The actions of Husayn, however, show that from beginning to end his strategy was aimed at a much higher goal than simply accession to the caliphate. There is no evidence that he tried, while at Mecca, to enlist active supporters from among the people who gathered around him or to propagate his cause among the great numbers of people who were coming to Mecca for the Hajj; there is also no evidence that he attempted to send his emissaries to stir up any rebellion in provinces such as Yemen and Persia, which were sympathetic to his house, even though advised

p: ۲۴۲

Tabari, II, pp.۲۳۳ f.; Maqatil, p.۹۶ -۱
.Tabari, II p.۲۳۴; Dinawari, p.۲۲۹; Bidaya, VIII, pp. ۱۵۱ f -۲

by some of his family members to do so. And above all, had he acted promptly on the invitation of the Kufans, while the governorship of the city was in the hands of the weak Nu'man b. Bashir, he might have had a fair chance of success. His speedy arrival would not only have forestalled any effective action on the part of the Umayyad government, but would also have stirred real enthusiasm among the Ku fans. This :was emphasized by the leaders of the movement when they wrote

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate; to al-Husayn b. 'Ali, from his" Shi'a, the faithful Muslims: Further make haste, for the people are awaiting you, as (they have no Imam other than you! So haste, and again haste! Peace."(۱

This last letter was signed by a number of people and was sent with a delegation consisting of Hani b. Hani as-Sabi'I and Sa'id b. 'Abd Allah al-Hanafi, the two most trusted Shi'is of Kufa. In response to all these approaches, however, Husayn sent only

one letter in reply through this last delegation. The content of this letter is worthy of :note; it reads

From Husayn b. 'Ali to the believers and the Muslims [note that the word Shi'a is not" used]. Hani and Sa'id came to me with your letters, they being the last among your messengers and delegations to come to me. I have understood what you said and that you have invited me to come to you because you have

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Tabari, II, pp.۲۳۴ f.; Ya'qubi, II, p.۲۴۲ -۱

no Imam to guide you, and that you hope my arrival there will unite you in the right path and in the truth. I am sending my cousin and the trusted one from my family [Muslim b. 'Aqil] to report to me about your affairs. If his report conforms with what you have written, I will soon come. But you must be clear about the fact that the Imam is only one who follows the Book of God, makes justice and honesty his conduct and behaviour, judges with truth, and devotes himself to the service of God. Peace."(۱)

The last sentence of the letter, explaining the duties of an Imam and the nature of the Imamate, helps us to understand Husayn's approach and attitude towards the whole .problem

Abu Mikhnaf has also preserved for us Husayn's letter to the Shi'is of Basra, which is .equally worthy of quotation here

:It reads

God has chosen Muhammad from among his people, graced him with His“ Prophethood and selected him for His message. After he admonished the people and conveyed His message to them God took him back unto Himself. We, being his family (ahl), his close associates endowed with the quality of guardianship (awliya'), his trustees and vice regent (awliya'), and his heir and legatee (warith), are the most deserving among all the people to take his place. But the people preferred themselves over us for this [privilege]. We became contented, disliking dissension and anxious to preserve the peace and well-being [of the community], though we

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.Tabari, II, p.۲۳۵; Mufid, Irshad, II, pp.۳۵ f -۱

were fully aware that we were more entitled to this [leadership] than those who had taken it for themselves... I have sent my messenger to you and I call you to the Book of God, and the Sunna of his Prophet, the Sunna which has become obliterated and innovations have become active and energetic. If you listen to me and obey my orders I will guide you to the right path. May the Peace and the Mercy of God be upon (you."(۱

The content of this letter is a complete statement of the Shi'i doctrine of the Imamate even at this early stage. That the historical sources have recorded little of what we may call Shi'i religio-political theory is due to the fact that their main interest has been in events, not in the underlying principles behind those events. Yet in narrating the events the sources have preserved certain documents such as letters or speeches .which give us a glimpse of those ideals which underly the events

We have quoted one of Hasan's letters in the previous chapter and pointed out the thinking of the Ahl al-Bayt. Now in the time of Husayn, twenty years after, Husayn's letters give exactly the same vein of thinking. In these letters Husayn adequately explains the concept of walaya, which means that God has bestowed upon the family of the Prophet special honour and qualities, thereby making them the ideal rulers, and

that through their presence on earth His grace is disseminated. The other two

p: ۲۴۵

Tabari, II, p.۲۴۰ -۱

terms of doctrinal importance are walaya, trusteeship or custodianship, and warith, heir and legatee, which are used by Husayn. We have seen in Chapter ۴ that at the time of 'Ali election for the caliphate, he was hailed in these terms by his closest associates. Now after thirty-five years the same terms are being used by Husayn.

Both these terms carry the idea of God's recommendation of the family of the Prophet to the people, that Muhammad recommended 'Ali, and that at his death 'Ali recommended Hasan, who left the legacy of the House for Husayn. It may, however, be too early for these concepts to have assumed the full flowering of their doctrinal content, yet one can see their presence in their embryonic form.

The other important part of Husayn's letter is his declaration that the right of ruling the community is the exclusive right of the family of the Prophet and they alone can guide the people in the right path; or in other words, they alone, by virtue of their special qualities, can combine temporal power and religious guidance together. Moreover, by this statement Husayn made a judgement on the caliphates of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman. Then, in the last part of his letter, by calling people to the Sunna of the Prophet Husayn implicitly rejected the interpretations of the first three caliphs who were not among the Ahl al-Bayt. The followers of the House of the Prophet would, therefore, go back directly to the Sunna of the

p: ۲۴۶

Prophet and their Imams, who are divinely inspired (walaya).

However, Husayn decided to respond to the call. Two obvious factors inspired him to act. Firstly, being the grandson of the founder of Islam, he must have felt it his duty to respond to the repeated appeals of these Muslims; and secondly, Yazid's pressing demand for homage was such that Husayn's filial piety and pride could not allow him .to accept

It was a difficult situation. Acceptance of the authority of Mu'awiya as the head of the Muslim state was an entirely different matter from the acceptance of Yazid. Mu'awiya, in spite of his worldliness and indifferent attitude towards religion, did not .totally violate the norms of Islam, at least not outwardly

Yazid not only violated Qur'anic norms and Prophetic Sunna, but also openly subjected them to contempt and ridicule, as has been the consensus of Muslim writers of all times. Even Mu'awiya's own agents, in implementing the plan for Yazid's nomination, were concerned about the latter's character. Thus when Mu'awiya asked Ziyad to prepare the people of Basra and Kufa to accept Yazid's nomination, the governor advised Mu'awiya to try to mend the ways of his son before asking people to (swear allegiance to him.(۱

It would indeed be a great mistake to assess the case of Yazid without taking into consideration the living impact of the Prophet and the first generation of Islam. The tense contradiction between this and the character of Yazid ultimately provoked the tragedy of Karbala, to which we

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.See details in Tabari, II, pp.۱۷۴ f -۱

must now turn. In order to maintain the continuity of our narrative, the sources of our .information and their authenticity will be discussed at the end of the chapter

In spite of repeated appeals' and hundreds of letters sent by the Ku fans, Husayn did not take a hasty decision, and as a precaution sent his cousin, Muslim b. 'Aqil, to Kufa as his emissary with instructions to ascertain the truth of these representations and report back on his findings. As soon as Muslim arrived at Kufa there was held in the house of Sulayman b. Surad al-Khuzai'i a meeting which, for the sake of secrecy at this stage, was attended only by the leaders of the movement. In response to Husayn's letter, read before those present and quoted above, Shi'i leaders such as 'Abis b. Abi Habib ash-Shakiri, Habib b. Muzahir, and Sa'd b. 'Abd Allah al-Hanafi made passionate speeches and declared their wholehearted support for Husayn until the :last breath.(۱) We shall see shortly that their pledges were not empty words

they remained loyal to the cause, fulfilled their promises, and ultimately gave their lives with Husayn at Karbala. Apart from these religiously devoted people supporting the cause of the Ahl al-Bayt, the political supporters of 'Ali from among the people of Kufa did not think it wise to lag behind in supporting a movement which they thought might be successful in throwing off Umayyad domination and raising new opportunities for them. Muslim b. 'Aqil thus quickly gathered thousands of

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Tabari, II, pp.۲۳۷ f.; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۳۶; Bidaya, VIII, p.۱۵۲ -۱

pledges of support. The number of people who registered their names and swore allegiance to Muslim in the name of Husayn is variously given as ۱۲,۰۰۰ and ۱۸,۰۰۰, the majority of the sources recording the second figure.(۱) Soon the movement became so widespread that Muslim b. 'Aqil was able to preside over the public meetings from .the pulpit in the mosque of Kufa

Confident of Kufan support, Muslim consequently wrote to Husayn to come to Kufa and assume leadership of the people. The letter of Muslim was sent to Husayn not by

an ordinary messenger, but by 'Abis b. Habib ash-Shakiri, a trusted leader of the Shi'is of Kufa.(۲) Having been assured of the extent of Kufan enthusiasm, Husayn decided to go to Iraq. Already Ibn al-Hanafiya at Medina, and then 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar and 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas, when they met Husayn on the road between Medina and Mecca, had warned Husayn against the dangers. Again at Mecca Ibn 'Abbas, along with many other friends, reiterated their advice with greater insistence and tried to persuade him not to rely onKufan promises, reminding him of their instability, their treacherous nature, and how they had betrayed, at the hour of trial, his father and brother.(۳) On the other hand, 'Abd Allah b. az-Zubayr first hypocritically voiced his concern for the safety of Husayn in the enterprise(۴) but nevertheless urged him to go on with the plan, for he wanted to make a bid for power himself. While Husayn was in the

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۱- Tabari, II, p.۲۶۴; Mas'udi, Muruj; III, p.۵۴; Dinawari, p.۲۳۵; Baladhuri, II, p. ۸۰; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۳۸; Bidaya, VIII, p.۱۵۲. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih gives the figure as more than ۳۰,۰۰۰ in 'Iqd, IV, p. ۳۷۸

۲- This letter of Muslim was sent to Husayn on ۱۲ Dhu'l-Qa'da ۶۰/۱۵ August ۶۸۰, ۲۷ days before the murder of Muslim; see Tabari, II, pp.۲۶۴, ۲۷۱; Mufid, Irshad, II, pp.۶۷, ۷۲

۳- Tabari, II, pp.۲۲۰ f.; ۲۲۳,۲۷۴ f.; Dinawari, Pp.۲۲۹,۲۴۳ f.; 'Iqd, IV, p.۳۷۶; Maqatil, p.۱۰۹; Bidaya, VIII, pp. ۱۰۹ f.; ۱۶۰ ff

۴- Tabari, II, pp.۲۷۴-۷۶; Bidaya, VII I, p. ۱۶۶

Hijaz this was impossible, as the people would never give Ibn az-Zubayr precedence over the grandson of the Prophet(۱) The former was thus pleased to see that Husayn should leave the field free for him in Mecca. In spite of all the advice, however, Husayn did not abandon his project, for he had in mind a definite plan and strategy, as will be discussed later.

Receiving word of Muslim's arrival in Kufa and the support given to him by the people there, Yazid, no longer trusting the mild-tempered and weak governor of the town,

Nu'man b. Bashir, appointed his strong man 'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad, the governor of Basra, to take charge of Kufa as well and to go there at once. The immediate task to be carried out was to crush the Shi'i movement by taking whatever measures were required for this purpose. The text of Yazid's letter is preserved by various sources and gives a clear idea of his violent attitude towards the movement in support of (Husayn.(۲

Fully aware of the insurrection in Kufa in favour of Husayn, Ibn Ziyad rode into the city in disguise, wearing a black turban, covering his face, and surrounding himself with a small squadron of horsemen. The Kufans, who were expecting Husayn, mistook Ibn Ziyad for the former, gathered all around his horse, greeted him enthusiastically, and (shouted: "Hail to you, O son of the Prophet; we have been waiting you."(۳

Ibn Ziyad, quietly observing the people's enthusiasm for Husayn, entered the

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Tabari, loc. cit.; Baladhuri, IVB, p. '۴; Dinawari, p. ۲۲۹; Maqatil, p.۱۰۹; Bidaya, VIII, pp. -۱ ۱۶۰, ۱۶۳

See the text of Yazid's order in Tabari, II, pp.۲۲۸, ۲۴۰. A still more detailed version is -۲ given by Jahshiyari, Al-Wuzara' wa'l-Kuttab, ed. Saqqa, Ibyari, and Shibli (Cairo, ۱۹۳۸), p.۳'; Dinawari, pp.۲۳۱, ۲۴۲; Bidaya, VIII, p.۱۵۲; Mufid Irshad, II, p.۴۰

Tabari, II, pp.۲۲۹, ۲۴۱; Dinawari, p.۲۳۲; Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p. ۵۷; Maqatil, p. ۹۶; - ۳ Bidaya, VIII, p.۱۵۳; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۴۱

mosque along with the crowds, mounted the pulpit, and then suddenly tore the veil from his face. He delivered a terrifying speech, declaring death and unprecedented punishment for the sympathizers of Husayn, while making tempting promises for those who would prove their loyalty to the Caliph.(۱) The Kufans, known for their lack of resolution, were stricken by awe and fear, completely lost heart, and ultimately abandoned Muslim, who after attempting in vain to organize an immediate revolt, was captured and beheaded together with Hani b. 'Urwa in whose house he had (stayed.(۲

This unreliable attitude of the political supporters of Husayn, the so-called Shi'is of Kufa in general, once again demonstrates the weakness of their character, as had been pointed out to Husayn by those of the travellers coming from Kufa who happened to meet him on his way. For example, at a place called Sifah he met the poet Farazdaq and inquired about conditions in Kufa. Farazdaq replied: "Their hearts are with you, but their swords are with your enemies."(٣)

Husayn left Mecca on ٨ Dhu'l-Hijja/١٠ September ۶٨٥, the same day Muslim b. 'Aqil was beheaded in Kufa. He had only about ۵٠ men from among both his relatives and friends able to bear arms, besides women and children, accompanying him from Mecca on the fateful journey. Husayn's sudden departure from Mecca, where he had been staying for the past five months and where a great number of people were arriving for the Hajj, only two days away, cannot have

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١- Tabari, II, p.٢۴٢; Dinawari, p.٢٣٢; Maqatil, p.٩٧; Bidaya, VIII, p.١۵۴; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۴١

٢- See Tabari, II, p. ٢۶٧; Mas'udi, Muruj, III, pp.۵٩ f.; Dinawari, p.٢۴٠; Maqatil, pp. ١٠٠-٨; Bidaya, VII I, pp.١۵٣-٧; Mufid, Irshad, II, pp. ۴٢-۶٧

٣- Tabari, II, pp.٢۴٢, ٢٧٧; Dinawari, p.٢۴۵; Bidaya, VIII, p. ١۶۶

been without some serious cause. Tabari and other sources, quoting Husayn himself, report that the Umayyad government sent some soldiers disguised as pilgrims to arrest him or even assassinate him.(١) Though it is difficult to ascertain the authenticity of this sort of report, still we cannot rule. out a possibility of this kind in view of what happened to the holy cities later at the hands of the army sent by Yazid in connection with the rebellion of Ibn az-Zubayr.

While Husayn was heading towards Iraq, Ibn Ziyad, after killing Muslim and Hani,

made Kufa a scene of terror and horror. First, he applied severe economic pressure on the population through the 'arifs, whose function and importance as being responsible for distribution of stipends and the maintenance of law and order in their respective 'irafas has already been discussed in Chapter ۵. He exploited these state functionaries and ordered them to write down the names of any strangers or rebellious or suspicious people in their irafas. He held the 'arifs responsible for any trouble that might occur in their 'irafa and threatened that the 'arif would be crucified and the entire 'irafa would be deprived of its stipend if anything was concealed from Ibn Ziyad. Secondly, he made a declaration that anyone suspected of supporting Husayn would be hanged without trial, his house would be set on fire, and his property would be confiscated.(۲)

Kufa was thus soon brought under full control. At the same time, Ibn Ziyad blockaded all the

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۱- Tabari, II, p. ۲۷۸; Ya'qubi, II, p. ۲۴۹;Bidaya, VIII, p. ۱۶۷. Shi'I sources state that Yazid sent some soldiers disguised as pilgrims to assassinate Husayn amidst the crowds assembled for the Hajj; see Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۶۹

۲- Tabari, II, p.۲۴۲

roads leading from the Hijaz to Kufa and gave strict orders forbidding anyone from entering or leaving the territory of Kufa. At Al-Qadisiya, which by the normal route links Kufa with the Hijaz, he set up a strong military post with an army of ۴,۰۰۰ troops under the command of Husayn b. an-Numayr at-Tamimi. Similarly, other border areas like Qutqutana, La'la', and Kaffan, which link Kufa with Basra and other parts of Iraq, were being heavily patrolled by the Umayyad army;(۱) and consequently it was almost impossible for anyone to enter or leave Kufa. Husayn learned of all these strict measures from the Bedouins, but continued his journey undeterred.

When he reached AthTha'libiya he received word from some travellers of the execution of Muslim b. 'Aqil and Hani b. 'Urwa at Kufa; then at Zubala he learned that

his messenger Qays b. Mushir as-Saydawi; whom he had dispatched from Hijir, the fourth stage from Mecca, with a letter for the Kufans informing them of his imminent arrival, had been captured at the checkpoint at Al-Qadisiya and that he had been brutally killed by Ibn Ziyad in Kufa: he was thrown from the top of the governor's palace when he refused to curse Husayn to save his own life.(۲) Husayn could not control his tears at the tragic fate of his trusted follower and, quoting a verse of the :Qur'an, said

Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with God. Some'" of them have completed their vow

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Tabari, II, pp. ۲۸۵, ۲۸۸ f.; Dinawari, p.۲۴۳; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۷۱ -۱

Tabari, II, pp. ۲۸۹ ff.; ۲۹۳, ۳۰۳; Dinawari; pp.۲۴۷ f.; Bidaya, VIII, pp. z۶۸, ۲۷۴; Mufid, -۲ Irshad, II, p.۷۲

i.e. have sacrificed their lives in fulfilling their vow], and some others are still waiting] [to die]; but they have never changed [their determination] in the least.' (Qur'an, XXXIII,. ۲۳). O God, make Paradise an abode for us [the surviving ones] and for them [the ones who have been killed], and unite both of us in a resting place under your (mercy and make your reward our only object of desire and our treasure."(۱

This statement by Husayn is clear enough to demonstrate that he was fully aware of what was going to happen to him and that he was fully prepared for it. Another expression of Husayn's thinking is reflected by his proclamation to his companions which he made after receiving this news at Zubala. He stood among those accompanying him and after informing them of the doleful news and of the obvious danger of death and complete destruction for which he was heading, he asked them to leave him and withdraw to safety. Those who had joined him during the journey

with certain hopes of material gains did depart, and there remained with him only those who had followed him from the Hijaz.(۲) These statements by Husayn must be taken into consideration, for they are important for an understanding of his thinking, .which will be discussed below

Leaving Zubala, Husayn reached Batn 'Aqiq, a place a few stages from Kufa; and upon learning in detail of the strong military force stationed at Al-Qadisiya, he changed his route to enter Kufa

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۱- Tabari, II, p.۳۰۳; Bidaya, loc. cit.

۲- Tabari, II, p.۲۹۴; Dinawari, p.۲۴۸; Bidaya, VIII, p. ۱۶۹; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۷۷

from another direction. Husayn b. Numayr, the commander at Al-Qadisiya, was informed of Husayn's change of route and sent a detachment of ۱,۰۰۰ troops under the command of Hurr b. Yazid at-Tamimi al-Yarbu'i to intercept him. When they appeared on the horizon, Husayn ordered his people to pitch their tents at a nearby .place called Dh(۱Husm (or Husam). The army of Hurr soon reached Husayn

The day was hot and Hurr's army had run out of water; the grandson of the Prophet could not tolerate that even his enemies should suffer from thirst, and he ordered his men to give water to the Umayyad troops and to their horses. Husayn himself took part in serving water to those badly affected by thirst and the heat.(۱) Hurr had a certain regard for Husayn, and at both prayers of the day he, along with his troops, prayed behind him. Even when four of the leading Shi'is of Kufa who had managed to escape from the city joined Husayn at this point, Hurr, though he protested, did not dare to use force.(۲) After each of the two prayers, Husayn explained to his :adversaries the reasons which had caused him to set out

O people of Kufa! You sent to me your delegations and wrote me letters saying that "you had no Imam and that I should come to unite you and lead you in the way of God ... You wrote that we, the Ahl al-Bayt, are more qualified to govern your affairs than

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۱- Tabari, II, pp.۲۹۶ f.; Dinawari, p.۲۴۹; Bidaya, VIII, p.۱۷۲; Mufid, Irshad, II, pp. ۷۸ ff

۲- Tabari, loc. cit.; Dinawari, loc. cit.; Bidaya, loc. cit.; Mufid, loc. cit.

those who claim things to which they have no right and who act unjustly and wrongfully.... But if you have changed your minds, have become ignorant of our rights, and have forgotten your delegations and repeated appeals to me to come for the sake of your religion... I shall turn back."(۱)

Then Husayn showed Hurr two sacks full of the letters sent by the Kufans to him, but Hurr said he knew nothing of these and that he had come with the orders of Ibn Ziyad to arrest him and his party as prisoners to be handed over to Ibn Ziyad. Husayn refused to submit, but still Hurr did not use force against him. After some argument it was agreed that Husayn should keep on travelling along the Euphrates in the opposite direction from Kufa until fresh orders arrived from the governor, and that Hurr would follow Husayn closely. When they reached the district of Ninawa (or Naynawa) a horseman arrived from Kufa. Without greeting Husayn, he gave Hurr a letter from Ibn Ziyad ordering him not to allow the "rebels" to make a halt except in a desert place without fortifications or water.(۲) Zuhayr b. al-Qayn, a companion of Husayn, then suggested that he should attack Hurr's small detachment and occupy a fortified village called Al-'Aqr, but i;۱usayn refused to be the one to initiate hostilities. Husayn, however, managed to proceed only a little farther until they reached the plain of Karbala and there pitched their tents. It was ۲

۱- Tabari, II, pp. ۲۹۸ f. See also Dinawari, p.۲۴۹; Bidaya, VIII, p.۱۷۲; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.

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Tabari, II, pp.٢٩٩-٣٠٧; Dinawari, pp.٢۴٩-٥١; Bidaya, VIII, pp. ١٧٢-S; Mufid, Irshad, II, -٢ p.٨۴

.Muharram ۶١/٢ October ۶٨٠

On the third of Muharram the situation deteriorated as 'Umar b. Sa'd arrived with the Umayyad army of ۴,٠٠٠ men and assumed overall command on the field. Upon reaching Karbala Ibn Sa'd learned that Husayn now intended to return to Medina; but Ibn Ziyad, on receiving word of this development, ordered that all the "rebels" should render homage to Yazid. Meanwhile, they were to be prevented from reaching the river. 'Umar b. Sa'd accordingly stationed a force of ٥٠٠ cavalry on the road to the river, and for three days before the massacre on the tenth of Muharram Husayn and party suffered terribly from thirst. A daring sortie led by 'Abbas, Husayn's brother, managed to reach the river but succeeded in filling only a few waterskins. Ibn Sa'd was still trying to persuade the governor to find some peaceful means to avoid shedding the blood of the grandson of the Prophet, but all in vain. Ibn Ziyad sent his final orders through Shamir b. Dhu'l-Jawshan (commonly written as Shimr) either to attack Husayn immediately or to hand over the command of the army to Shamir, the bearer of the letter.(١) The orders also specified that when Husayn fell in the fighting his body was to be trampled, because he was "a rebel, a Seditious person, a brigand, an oppressor".(٢) Ibn Sa'd had to act, as he was anxious to retain his appointment as the deputy of the governor of the province of Ray' and was well aware

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For details see Tabari, II, pp. ٣٠٨-١۶; Dinawari, pp.٢٥٣-٥; Bidaya, VIII, pp.١٧٥ f.; - ١ Mufid, Irshad, II, pp. ٨٥-٩١

Tabari, II, p.٣١۶; Dinawari, p.٢٥٥; Bidaya, VIII, p.١٧٥ -٢

."of the fact that Husayn would never submit, for the latter "had a proud soul in him

Soon after receiving these new orders on the evening of ۹ Muharram, Ibn Sa'd advanced with his army towards the camp of Husayn. Noticing this, Husayn sent his brother 'Abbas, along with some followers, to ascertain the reason for their approach. 'Abbas was told of the orders of Ibn Ziyad, and when informed of this Husayn sent 'Abbas back to request a respite of one night. This was granted. At this point Husayn assembled his relatives and supporters and delivered a speech. This speech is unanimously reported in the events of the night of 'Ashura by the sources through different authorities, and it is useful in understanding Husayn's thinking. He said:

"I give praise to God who has honoured us with the Prophethood, has taught us the Qur'an, and favoured us with His religion ... I know of no worthier companions than mine; may God reward you with all the best of His reward. I think tomorrow our end will come ... I ask you all to leave me alone and to go away to safety. I free you from your responsibilities for me, and I do not hold you back. Night will provide you a cover; use it as a steed ... You may take my children with you to save their lives."(۱)

With only a few exceptions, his supporters, from among both friends and relatives, refused to leave or survive after him; through their

۱- Tabari, II, pp.۳۱۹ if.; Bidaya, VIII, p. ۱۷۶; Maqatil, p.۱۱۲; Mufid, Irshad, II, pp.۹۳ f.

speeches, to be discussed later, they showed an unshakable devotion to his cause. After some measures were taken for the safety of women and children and for Defence by bringing the tents closer together, tying them to one another, digging ditches in the rear and on the flanks and filling them with wood, the rest of the night was spent in prayer, recitation of the Qur'an, and worship and remembrance of

(God.(1

The borrowed night ended, and the fateful morning of ١٠ Muharram brought with it the summons of death and the tragic end of the family of the Prophet and its handful of supporters. Husayn drew up in front of the tents his small army of ٧٢ men: ٣٢ horsemen and ۴٠ foot soldiers of varying ages ranging from the seventy-year-old Muslim b. 'Awsaja to the fourteen-year-old Qasim b. Hasan b. 'Ali The rear of the tents was protected by setting on fire the heaps of wood and reeds. Zuhayr b. al-Qayn was given command of the right wing, Habib b. Muzahir al-Asadi of the left, and 'Abbas b. .'Ali was entrusted with the standard of the Hashimite house

Husayn, preparing himself for the fateful encounter, dressed himself in the cloak of the Prophet, perfumed himself with musk, and rode on horseback with the Qur'an raised in his hand. Addressing his enemies and invoking God in a long and beautiful :sermon, he said

O God, you are my only Trust in every calamity; you are my only hope in every" hardship; you

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Tabari, II, pp.٣٢۴ f.; Bidaya, VIII, p.١٧٧; Dinawari, p. ٢۵۶; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.٩٧ -١

are the only promise in the anxiety and distress in which hearts become weak and [human] action becomes slight, in which one is deserted and forsaken by his own friends, and in which the enemies take malicious pleasure and rejoice at his misfortunes. O God, I submit myself to You; my complaint is to You alone against my enemies, and to You alone is my desire and request. Who else other than you can relieve me from grief. You alone are the custodian of every blessing and the Master of

(every excellence and the last resort for every desire."(1)

The enemy replied to Husayn's discourse with the most insulting and heinous remarks; among them, Shamir, seeing the fire burning by Husayn's tents, said: "Husayn, you are hastening for the fire in this world even before the Fire of the Day of judgement." Husayn's companion, Muslim b. 'Awsaja, could not control himself at this heinous insult and asked his permission to reply with an arrow, but Husayn stopped him, saying: "We will never start the fighting from our side."(2) As the situation grew hotter and an attack from the Umayyad army imminent, Husayn once again came forward; after praising God and praying for His blessing on Muhammad, he addressed his enemies:

"O people! you are accusing me, but think who I am! Then search your hearts for what you are doing to me. Consider well if it be lawful for you to kill me and violate my sacrosanctity. Am I not the son

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۱- Tabari, II, p. ۲۲۷;Bidaya, VIII, pp. ۱۶۹, ۱۷۸; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۹۹

۲- Tabari, II, p. ۳۲۸; Mufid, loc. cit.

of the daughter of your Prophet, the son of the Prophet's wasi and cousin...? Did not the Prophet say of me and my brother that 'they are the lords of the youth of Paradise'? You cannot deny the truth of what I have said concerning the merits of the family of Muhammad. Are all these not sufficient to prevent you from shedding my blood?"

And again:

"If you search in the whole East and the West you will not find a grandson of the Prophet other than me."(1)

Husayn's numerous speeches and repeated appeals in the name of the Prophet to his enemies' religious sentiments, which he made throughout the day and after each loss of life among his supporters, were all in vain. The only reply he received was that he must submit himself to Yazid or be killed. To this demand Husayn's reply was that he could never humiliate himself like a slave.

The day-long battle-sometimes in single combat, sometimes collectively-began in the morning and ended shortly before sunset. The phases of the battle can be followed fairly clearly. After Husayn's first speech, the Umayyad army began firing arrows and duels took place. For most of the day there were series of single combats, with dialogues between the adversaries which are vividly recorded in the sources and which will be discussed in some detail later. It seems that two major assaults were made by the Umayyads before noon and were met with stiff resistance, but the Umayyad cavalry and ۵۰۰ archers maintained

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1- Tabari, II, p.۳۲۹; Bidaya, VIII, p.۱۷۹; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۱۰۰

steady pressure on Husayn's small force. As the latter could be approached only from the front, Ibn Sa'd sent some men from the right and left towards the Talibi's tents to destroy them, but the supporters of Husayn, slipping among the tents, defended them energetically. Shamir, with a strong force under his command, approached the tent of Husayn and his wives and would have set it on fire, but even his comrades reproached him for this and he went away ashamed.(1)

At noon Husayn and his followers performed the prayer of the Zuhr according to the rite of the Salat al-khawf(the prayer prescribed for when one faces a disastrous situation and calamity). It was in the afternoon that the battle became fiercer, and Husayn's supporters one after the other fell fighting in front of him. Until the last of them had perished not a single member of Husayn's family came to harm,(۲) but .finally it was the turn of his relatives

The first to killed was 'Ali al-Akbar, the son of Husayn, followed in quick succession by the son of Muslim b. 'Aqil, the sons of 'Aqil, three brothers of 'Abbas b. 'Ali from 'Ali's wife Umm al-Banin, then Qasim, the son of Hasan, a young and beautiful boy whose body was trampled and mutilated and whose death is described in touching terms. Husayn watched the fall of each of them and ran to the field to bring back their bodies and lay them in a row before his tent.(۳) One

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۱- See Tabari, II, pp.۳۳۵ ff., ۳۳۷ ff., ۳۴۴, ۳۴۶; Bidaya, VIII, pp. ۱۸۱ ff

۲ - Tabari, II, pp.۳۴۷, ۳۵' ff, ۳۵۵ f.; Bidaya, VIII, pp.۱۸۴ f.; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۱۰۹; .Dinawari, pp.۲۵۶ f

۳- Tabari, II, pp. ۳۵۶-۹; Dinawari, loc. cit.; Bidaya, VIII, pp.۱۸۵-۹; Mufid Irshad, II, pp. ۱۱۰-۴;Maqatil, pp. ۸۰-۱۱۳

by one all the Talibi's gave their lives fighting the enemy, and eventually there remained only two: Husayn and his half-brother 'Abbas b. 'Ali; the standard bearer of the vanquished army. Famous for his physical strength and bravery and known as "the moon of the Banu Hashim" because of his extraordinary beauty, the latter was a great support to Husayn throughout the period of torture and calamity. Now it was time for him to throw himself on to the swords of the bloodthirsty Umayyad army. With broken hearts, distressed and spattered with the blood of their dearest ones, .both brothers went together and fell upon the enemy

The enraged 'Abbas penetrated deep into the ranks of his foes, became separated

from Husayn, and was killed some distance away.(۱) Alone and weary, Husayn returned to the tents to console the terrified and grief-stricken women and children for what would befall them after his demise and to bid them farewell for the last time. Trying to calm his thirsty and crying infant child, Husayn took him in his arms just as an arrow struck the baby. Husayn lifted his hands with the dead child toward heaven and prayed to God for justice and rewards for his sufferings.(۲)

Exhausted and weary, lonely and dejected, wounded and bleeding, Husayn seated himself at the door of his tent. The Umayyad forces wavered for a moment, hesitant to kill the grandson of the Prophet. Finally it was Shamir who advanced with a small group of soldiers, but

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۱- Tabari, II, p.۳۸۶; Dinawari, pp.۲۵۷ f.; Maqatil, p.۸۴; Mufid, Irshad, II, p ۱۱۳

۲- Tabari; II, p.۳۶۰; Dinawari, p.۲۵۸; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۱۱۲; Ya'qubi; II, p.۲۴۰; Maqatil, p.۱۱۵

even he did not dare to deliver the final blow on Husayn; there merely ensued an altercation between the two. At last the son of 'Ali rose and threw himself on the Umayyads. Attacked from every side, he finally fell face-down on the ground just in front of his tent, while the women and children watched the dreadful -scene. A boy of tender age, 'Abd Allah, the youngest son of Hasan b. 'Ali, in a fit of horror and terror, could not be controlled by the women, rushed from the tent, and stretched his hands around his uncle to protect him. A sword fell upon him and cut off the hands of the young boy.(۱) Finally, as Sinan b. Anas b. 'Amr raised his sword again to make the final blow on Husayn, the latter's sister Zaynab came out of the tent and cried, addressing Ibn Sa'd:

"O 'Umar b. Sa'd, will Abu 'Abd Allah [Husayn's kunya] be killed while you are standing

(by and watching ?"(۲

Nothing could help. Sinan cut off the head of the grandson of the Prophet in front of the tent where the women and children were watching and crying. Khawali b. Yazid al (Asbahi took the head into his custody to be taken to Kufa.(۳

The combat having thus ended, the soldiers turned to pillage and looting. They seized Husayn's clothes, his sword, and whatever was on his body. They looted the tents and seized from the women their ornaments, their baggage, and even the mantles from

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۱- Tabari, II, pp.۳۶۱, ۳۶۳; Bidaya, VIII, p. .۱۸۷; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۱۱۴

۲- Tabari, II, p.۳۶۵; Bidaya, loc. cit.; Mufid, Irshad, II, p. ۱۱۶

۳- Tabari, II, p.۳۶۶; Bidaya, VIII, p.۱۸۸; Dinawari; p.۲۵۸; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۱۱۷

their heads. The only surviving male of the line of Husayn, his son 'Ali, who because of serious illness did not take part in the fighting, was lying on a skin in one of the tents. The skin was pulled from under him and Shamir would have killed him, but he was saved when Zaynab covered him under her arms and Ibn Sa'd restrained Shamir from striking the boy.(۱) The tragic day is known as Al-'Ashura, the tenth day of the month .of Muharram

The atrocities were not yet over. Husayn's body, already torn by numerous wounds, was trampled by the horses often mounted soldiers who volunteered to inflict this final indignity on the grandson of the Apostle of God.(۲) On the morning of ۱۱ Muharram, bodies of the Umayyad troops who had fallen in the battle were collected together; and after the prescribed prayer for the dead led by Ibn Sa'd, they were buried. But the headless bodies of Husayn and of those killed with him were even left

uncovered. On ١٢ Muharram, however, when the Umayyad forces left Karbala, the people of the tribe of Bani Asad from the nearby village of Ghadiriya came down and buried the bodies of Husayn and his companions on the spot where the massacre had taken place.(٣) It is of interest to note that those whose bodies were left in such a pitiful and contemptible manner not long before were so honoured and immortalized that their graves have become one of the most

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١- For the details of these cruel acts, see Tabari, II, p.٣٦٧; Bidaya, loc. cit.; Dinawari; p.٢٥٨; Mufid, Irshad, II, pp.١١٧ f.; Maqatil, pp. ١١٧ ff.

٢- Tabari; II, pp.٣٦٨ f.; Maqatil, p.١١٩; Mufid, loc. cit.

٣- Tabari, loc. cit.; Dinawari; p.٢٦٠; Bidaya, VIII, p.١٨٩

venerated sanctuaries, have been embellished with gold, and have been ornamented with splendid decoration; they soon became the centre of pilgrimage for a countless number of devotees. There is hardly any trace of the graves or of the memory of those who were the victors at Karbala, whereas the tombs of Husayn and his vanquished supporters with their lofty minarets have become landmarks and symbols of grace and hope for the destitute.

The morning of ١٢ Muharram saw a peculiar procession leaving Karbala for Kufa. Seventy٢wo heads were raised on the points of the lances, each of them held by one soldier, followed by the women of the Prophet's family on camels and the huge army of the Umayyads.(١) Abu Mikhnaf describes the scene of the departure of Zaynab and other women of the Prophet's family as captives from Karbala. Their lamentations at the sight of the massacred bodies of their sons, brothers, and husbands which were lying uncovered in front of them, caused even their enemies to shed tears. Qurra' b. Qays at- Tamimi, a member of the Umayyad army, is reported by Abu Mikhnaf as saying that he could never forget the scene when Husayn's sister Zaynab passed by the mutilated body of her brother; she cried in hysterical fits, saying:

O Muhammad! O Muhammad! The angels of Heaven send blessings upon you, but" this is your Husayn, so humiliated and disgraced, covered with blood and cut into pieces; and, O, Muhammad, your daughters are made captives, and your butchered

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Tabari, II, p.۳۶۹; Dinawari, p.۲۵۹; Bidaya, VIII, p. ۱۹۰; Mufid, Irshad, II, pp. ۱۱۸ f -۱.

family is left for the East Wind to cover with dust?"(۱)

After reaching Kufa the captives and the heads of the victims were presented to Ibn Ziyad, and the head of Husayn was placed in a tray in front of him in a court ceremony crowded with nobles and spectators. Ibn Ziyad, having a cane in his hand, struck the lips of Husayn again and again. Zayd b. Arqam, an old Companion of the Prophet present in the court, not aware of what had happened, recognized Husayn's face, was stricken by shock and grief, and shouted to Ibn Ziyad:

Remove your cane from these lips! By God, on these lips have I seen the lips of the" Prophet of God, kissing and sucking them."(۲)

He left the court weeping; outside, people heard him saying:

O people of the Arabs, after this day you have made yourselves home-born slaves" and cattle. You have killed the son of Fatima and made your ruler Ibn Marjana [kunya of Ibn Ziyad], who will now keep on killing your best men and force you to do the most hateful things. You must now be ready for the utmost disgrace."(۳)

The head of Husayn was erected for public display in Kufa before it was sent to Yazid in Damascus. How long the captives were detained in Kufa in a dungeon is not quite clear, but it seems that before long the captives and the heads were dispatched to Damascus to be presented to the Caliph. When the head of Husayn and

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Tabari, II, p.۳۷۰; Bidaya, VIII, p.۱۹۳ -۱

Tabari; II, p.۳۷۱; Dinawari, pp.۲۵۹ f.; Bidaya, VIII, p.۱۹۰ -۲

See sources cited in note ۵۳ -۳

the captive women and children were presented before Yazid, in a court ceremony equally as lavish as that of Ibn Ziyad, Zahr b. Qays, who led the caravan as the representative of Ibn Ziyad, made a long speech of presentation describing how Husayn and his companions had been massacred and how their bodies had been trampled and left for the eagles to eat.(۱) The reaction of Yazid is reported to have been different from that of Ibn Ziyad, and he regretted the haste with which his .governor had acted

This seems to be contrary to all those reports which describe Yazid's orders to his governor in Medina, and then to Ibn Ziyad in which he clearly ordered them to either exact homage from Husayn and his followers or behead them without delay. The conversation which took place between Yazid and both Zaynab and 'Ali b. al-Husayn, in which the Caliph rebuked them and treated them harshly, also cast doubt on his alleged feelings of remorse. Moreover, as is pointed out by Ibn Kathir, a Syrian pupil of Ibn Tamiya usually hostile to the Shi'i cause, if Yazid had really felt that his governor had committed a serious mistake in dealing with Husayn he would have taken some action against him. But, says Ibn Kathir, Yazid did not dismiss Ibn Ziyad from his post, did not punish him in any way, or even write a letter of censure for exceeding his orders.(۲) If Yazid at all expressed his remorse it must

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۱- Tabari, II, p.۳۷۵; Bidaya, VIII, p. ۱۹۱; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۱۲۳

۲- Bidaya, VIII, p.۲۰۳. For Yazid's reported remorse see Bidaya, VIII, pp.۱۹۱ ff; Tabari, II, pp.۳۷۶ ff

have been due to the fear of reaction or revolt by some section of the Muslim community.

After some time, however, Yazid released the captives and sent them back to Medina. Thus ended the most pathetic tragedy in the history of Islam. Edward Gibbon, with his limited sources of Islamic history and mainly depending on Ockley's narrative of Karbala, could not help but comment:

"In a distant age and climate, the tragic scene of the death of Husayn will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader."(۱)

We have seen in the previous chapter how ardently and passionately the Prophet loved his grandsons Hasan and Husayn, but only fifty years after the Prophet's death, as Dinawari points out,(۲) while many of the Prophet's Companions who were well aware of this affection were still alive, one of these beloved grandsons was brutally murdered at the hands of those who claimed to be members of the Umma of Muhammad.

With this brief summary of the lengthy accounts of the tragic end of Husayn, it is intended firstly to analyse how it became so easy for the Umayyads to destroy him and crush the Shi'i movement behind him; and secondly, to determine the elements of purely religious sentiment among those who readily sacrificed their lives with Husayn and thus made another step forward towards the consolidation of Shi'i thought in

.Islam

It has already been pointed out that of those who invited Husayn to Ku fa, and then ,those ۱۸,۰۰۰ who paid homage to his envoy, Muslim b. 'Aqil

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History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ed. J.B. Bury, ۲nd ed. (London, -۱ '۹۰'), V, p.۳۹۱

Akhbar, p.۲۵۹ -۲

not all were Shi 'is in the religious sense of the term, but were rather supporters of the house of 'Ali for political reasons-a distinction which must be kept clearly in mind in order to understand the early history of Shi'i Islam. They wrote to Husayn hundreds of letters, each signed by groups, and when Muslim b. 'Aqil reached Kufa they gathered around him; but this was for most of them an expression of their desire to throw off Syrian domination, a goal which at that time they thought was possible through Husayn. But as soon as Ibn Ziyad, well known in Islamic history for his high-handed policy, took over the governorship of Kufa and after all those extreme and severe measures carried out by him to crush the movement, the Kufans saw their hopes gone, and their characteristic lack of resolution in times of trial overcame their political aspirations. They thus submitted to the reality of circumstances rather than .endanger themselves for the cause

There was, however, a small group of the Ku fans who had invited the grandson of the Prophet and led the movement motivated purely by their religious feelings. Where were they when Husayn was so helplessly killed at Karbala? We have seen that after the execution of Muslim b. 'Aqil and Hani b. 'Urwa, Kufa was kept under firm control. Anyone suspected of sympathy for Husayn was to be executed. Naturally all the sincere leaders of the movement adopted the stratagem of hiding to escape arrest

and execution, not because they betrayed Husayn and wanted to save their lives, but, as we shall see presently, because they wanted to make themselves directly available .to Husayn, then on his way to Kufa

This may be seen by comparing the lists of names of those who gave their lives at Karbala with Husayn or later with the Tawwabun, with those who wrote the first letters of invitation to him and who had been leading the movement in Ku fa. We have seen that four of these Shi'i leaders of Kufa managed to join Husayn at Dhu Husm in spite of Hurr's objection. As soon as they heard of Husayn's arrival at Karbala, those who could, in spite of all the obstacles, somehow manage to reach Karbala did so; they laid down their lives before Husayn or any one from among his family members were hurt.' And of those who were not with Husayn at Karbala, some had already been arrested and some others, due to the heavy blockade of the roads, could not .make their way to Karbala until it was too late

When Husayn had left Mecca there were only ۵۰ persons with him, ۱۸ Talibi's or close relatives, and ۳۲ others. After the battle, however, ۷۲ heads were taken to be presented before Ibn Ziyad, ۱۸ of them Talibi's and ۵۴ Shi'is, though the real number of those who fell at Karbala with Husayn seems to have been more than ۷۲. Samawi and some other sources enumerate

the non-Talibi's and give the total number of victims as ۹۲.(۱) If this was the case, then it seems that the heads of those who had no tribal identity were not taken to Ibn Ziyad, thus resulting in the lower figure of ۷۲ deaths. Tabari and Dinawari list the names of the tribes and the numbers of heads carried by them to Kufa as follows: Kinda, thirteen; Hawazin, twenty; Tamim, seventeen; Asad, six; Madhhij, seven; Thaqif, twelve; Azd, five; and another seven of unknown tribal affiliation.(۲) There is a slight variation between the lists of Tabari and Dinawari. While Tabari mentions the

Madhhij as carrying seven heads and does not record Thaqif's twelve, Dinawari omits Madhhij's seven and mentions the Thaqif as having carried twelve heads, in addition to mentioning five heads held by the Azd. Scrutiny of other sources confirms both: seven heads carried by Madhhij and twelve by Thaqif. This gives a total of ۸۷ victims .of the massacre whose heads were presented at the court of Ibn Ziyad

Tabari and other sources also tell us in detail how Husayn's true followers managed to escape secretly from Kufa and reach Karbala.(۳) In addition, we find a few names of those who came to Karbala with the Umayyad army and, when they saw the sacrilegious treatment by the Umayyads of the grandson of the Prophet, could no longer resist their feelings for the house of the Prophet, defected from the Umayyad ,ranks, and cast their lot with Husayn. Besides Hurr

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۱- Ibsar al-'ayn fi ahwal al-ansar al-Husayn (Najaf, ۱۳۴۱ AH), pp.۴۷ ff

۲- Tabari; II, p.۳۸۶; Akhbar, p.۲۵۹

۳- See Tabari, II, pp.۳۰۳, ۳۳۵

whose defection is reported in great detail, it is also commonly recorded that on the morning of 'Ashura, just before the battle began, thirty nobles of Kufa who were with the army of Ibn Sa'd defected from him over to Husayn's side and fought for him.(۱)

Furthermore, it should be noted again that the blockade of all the roads coming into Kufa and its vicinity made it almost impossible for the majority of those Shi'is of Kufa who were in hiding, and also for those residing in other cities like Basra, to come to the aid of Husayn. Nevertheless, a few persons from Basra did reach Karbala and shared the fate of Husayn.(۲) We have, therefore, good grounds for supposing that had there not been so many obstacles and had there been sufficient time and opportunity to mobilize their strength, quite a few of the Tawwabun (penitents), to be discussed in

the following chapter, who later on sacrificed their lives in the name of Husayn, would .have been with him at Karbala

Circumstantial evidence allows us to suggest that those who gave their lives for the sake of the slain Husayn would have gone at least as far for the living Husayn. On the other hand, the aim of elaborating this fact is not to suggest that had there not been those unavoidable circumstances Husayn's fate would have been any different. It would certainly have been the same in any case because of the well-organized and formidable military strength of the Umayyads

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Bidaya, VIII, p.۱۷۰; 'Iqd, IV, p.۳۸۰ -۱

Tabari; II, p.۲۳۶ -۲

and the characteristic fickleness of the majority of the Kufans, coupled with the as yet weak and disorganized movement of the religiously motivated Shi'is. Our purpose is to suggest that under slightly better circumstances the defeat at Karbala would not have occurred so helplessly and without there being any conspicuous resistance, and thus we would have a clearer picture of the physical strength of the Shi'i movement at this stage. To support this hypothesis we can cite the successes achieved not long after Karbala, but under better circumstances and with better opportunities, by Al-.Mukhtar and Ibn az-Zubayr, both far less important than the grandson of the Prophet

We will only point out here in passing that Al-Mukhtar b. Abi 'Ubayda ath-Thaqafi seized possession of Kufa in ۶۶/۶۸۶-۶۸۷ and captured Mesopotamia and some parts of the eastern provinces from the Umayyads mainly in the name of the blood of Husayn. Re, however, lost control of the situation and was killed in ۶۷/۶۸۷ or ۶۸/۶۸۸. 'Abd Allah b. az-Zubayr proclaimed his caliphate in ۶۱/۶۸۰-۸۱ and by ۶۴/۶۸۴ had established his power in Iraq, in southern Arabia, and in the greater part of Syria. Re was killed in

.battle against Hajjaj in ۷۳/۶۹۲ after ruling for almost nine years

An analysis of the sources describing the movement of and the support given to both Al-Mukhtar and Ibn az-Zubayr leaves us in hardly any doubt that some of the component parts of Husayn's movement, later on frustrated and perverted, gave vent to their indignation against the

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Umayyads under the banners of these two adventurers. This comparison leads us to another important point. Al-Mukhtar and Ibn az-Zubayr achieved considerable political success in their enterprises, and both were able to rule certain parts of the Muslim world for quite a few years; but neither could leave any religious following behind him after he had fallen, though both were, in a sense, as much martyrs as .Husayn himself

There is no evidence at all that Ibn az-Zubayr left any sectarian following behind him; the name of Al-Mukhtar was kept alive for a very short time and was followed by a small group, but it soon afterwards lost its identity and was merged in a wider group.(۱) The reason is both obvious and vital. Neither Al-Mukhtar, nor Ibn az-Zubayr, nor their supporters had any specific ideal or any particular view which could keep their memory alive in the annals of religious thought in Islam. Husayn and his cause, on the other hand, though militarily a complete failure, were so conspicuously upheld by a sizable part of the Muslim community that his name became an emblem of the .identity or entity of the second largest group in Islam

This was due to the fact that his movement was based on a particular view of the leadership of the community, which has been elaborated in the first two chapters above and which has also been pointed out in the letters written by I;۱asan to .Mu'awiya and by Husayn to the Shi'is of Kufa

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See B. Lewis, Origins of Isma'ilism (Cambridge, ۱۹۴۰), p.۲۷; also Nawbakhti, Firaq - ۱ ash-Shi'a, p.۴۵

The memory of Al-Mukhtar and Ibn az-Zubayr died with the lapse of time and could only find place in the annals of history. The memory of Husayn remained alive in the hearts and minds of the Muslims and has become a recurrent theme for certain values. The section of the Muslim community which upheld the cause and memory of Husayn at the expense of and in disregard for political realities, but still remaining an integral part of the religious entity of Islam, was thrust into a sectarian role by that majority which, though unwillingly, compromised with the political realities at the .religious level

Some Muslim historians writing directly under the influence of the ruling authorities of the time, and those theologians who by necessity tried to find a compromise position between the ruling authorities on the one hand and the Islamic community on the other, described Husayn's action as an ambitious attempt to wrest political power and as a mistake of judgement. Western scholars of Islam, in their rather superficial attempts to study Husayn's action, have subjected themselves to a certain ."mechanical methodology which they term a "scientific historical approach

The German school of orientalists, the first to enter the field of modern orientalism, though it indeed made valuable and solid contributions in certain branches of Arab-Islamic studies with admirable thoroughness and depth, was so committed to a particular historical methodology that it could never grasp the "feelings" and "necessary aptitude" so vitally important in understanding religious history and its .development

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The impact of the German school has been so strong that this trend has persisted,

and the subsequent schools of the French and British scholars, with very few exceptions, have followed the same trend. It is thus rather regrettable that the tragedy of Karbala has been regarded by these scholars with the same mechanical historicism: none of them has ever tried to study Husayn's action in its meaning and purpose. It was therefore natural for these scholars to describe Husayn as an ill-fated adventurer attempting to seize political power, his movement as a rebellion against the established order, and his action as a fatal miscalculation of Kufan promises.(۱)

We have already hinted in passing that Husayn had been fully aware of the situation and the consequences. On the road from Medina to Mecca, then at the time when he was leaving the "House of God" for Ku fa, and finally throughout the journey from Mecca to Ku fa, he was warned by dozens of people about the danger and that "the hearts of the Iraqis were for him but that their swords were for the Umayyads."

But I;۱usayn's replies to all of those who attempted to deflect him from his purpose were always more or less in the same vein:

"God does as He wishes..., I leave it to God to choose what is best..., God is not hostile to him who proposes the just cause."(۲)

From these replies it is clear that Husayn was fully aware of the dangers he would encounter and

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۱- The best example of this, among many others, is Henri Lammens' Le califat de Yazid and his El' article Husayn". Also see Welihausen, Arab Kingdom, pp.۱۴۵-۷

۲- Tabari, II, pp. ۲۱۶-۹۵; also note ۱۴ above

that he had a certain strategy and plan in mind to bring about a revolution in the

consciousness of the Muslim community. Furthermore, it is also very clear from the sources, as has been stated before, that Husayn did not try to organize or mobilize military support, which he easily could have done in the Hijaz, nor did he even try to exploit whatever physical strength was available to him. Among many instances in this respect we will restrict ourselves to citing only one. At a place called 'Uzayb al-Hujaynat, after having already learned about the Kufan abandonment of his envoy Muslim b. 'Aqil and his subsequent death, it was clear to Husayn that he had no hope of support or even survival in Kufa. Nevertheless, he totally refused an offer of safety, if not success, extended to him. Abu Mikhnaf and other sources relate that at this place four of the leading Shi'is of Kufa managed to reach Husayn with the help of Tirimmah. b. 'Adi at-Ta'i, who acted as a guide (dalil). Tirimmah made a strong appeal :to Husayn, saying

By God I have left Kufa in such a condition that when you reach there you will not find" a single person who could help you against your enemies. By God, if you go there, you and those who are travelling with you will be instantly butchered. For God's sake, abandon your plan and come with me to the safety of our mountains here. By God, these mountains

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have been beyond the reach of the kings of Ghassan and Himyar, from Nu'man b. al-Mundhir, and from any black and red [i.e., from any formidable power]. By God, if you decide to come with me no one can humiliate you or stop you from doing so [reference to Hurr]. Once you reach my villages on the mountains, we will send for .'men of [the tribes of] Ba'ja and Salma of the Tayy

Then, even ten days will not pass before the horsemen and the foot soldiers of Tayy' arrive to help you. You can stay with us as long as you wish, and if then you want to make an uprising from there, or if you are disturbed, I would lead a force -of twenty thousand men of the Tayy' with you, who would strike [at your enemies] with their

swords in front of you. By God, no one will ever be able to reach you, and the eyes of the people of Tayy' would remain guarding you.'(1)

Husayn's only reply to this extremely valuable and timely offer, when all hopes of support in Kufa had already vanished, was:

"God bless you and your people, but I am committed to some people, and I cannot go back from my word, though I did not know what would happen between us and them. However, things are destined."(2)

One cannot help asking how it would be possible for a man making a bid for power to refuse to accept such a promising offer of

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1- Tabari; II, pp.۳۰۴ f.

2- ibid.

support. Can anyone think that after knowing all of the latest developments in Kufa Husayn was still hoping to find any support or even the slightest chance of survival in Kufa? Moreover, we have detailed descriptions of the fact that when at Zubala I;۱usayn learned of the brutal execution of his envoy Qays b. Mushir, he gathered those accompanying him and asked them to leave him alone and go to safety. After Zubala, Husayn made this proclamation to his companions time and again, the last of these being on the night of 'Ashura. Is it conceivable that anyone striving for power would ask his supporters to abandon him, no matter how insignificant their number might have been? No one can answer these questions in the affirmative. What then did Husayn have in mind?

?Why was he still heading for Kufa

It is rather disappointing to note that Western scholarship on Islam, given too much to historicism, has placed all its attention on the discrete external aspects of the event of Karbala and has never tried to analyse the inner history and agonizing conflict in Husayn's mind. Anatomy of the human body can give knowledge of the various parts and their composition, but cannot give us an understanding of man himself. In the case of Husayn, a careful study and analysis of the events of Karbala as a whole reveals the fact that from the very beginning Husayn was planning for a complete revolution in the religious consciousness of the Muslims. All of

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his actions show that he was aware of the fact that a victory achieved through military strength and might is always temporal, because another stronger power can in course of time bring it down in ruins. But a victory achieved through suffering and sacrifice is everlasting and leaves permanent imprints on man S consciousness. Husayn was brought up in the lap of the Founder of Islam and had inherited the love .and devotion to the Islamic way of life from his father

As time went on, he noticed the great changes which were rapidly taking place in the community in regard to religious feelings and morality. The natural process of conflict and struggle between action and reaction was now at work. That is, Muhammad's progressive Islamic action had succeeded in suppressing Arab conservatism, embodied in heathen pre-Islamic practices and ways of thinking. But in less than thirty years' time this Arab conservatism revitalized itself as a forceful reaction to challenge Muhammad's action once again. The forces of this reaction had already moved into motion with the rise of Mu'awiya, but the succession of Yazid was a clear sign that the reactionary forces had mobilized themselves and had now re-emerged with full vigour. The strength of this reaction, embodied in Yazid's character, was .powerful enough to suppress or at least deface Muhammad's action

Islam was now, in the thinking of Husayn, in dire need of reactivation of Muhammad's action against the old Arabian reaction and thus required a complete shake-up. Such a

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shake up would not have been so effective at the time of Hasan, for his rival Mu'awiya, though he had little regard for religion, atleast outwardly tried to veil his reactionary attitude of the old Arabism. Yazid did not care even for this; he exposed these pretensions and his conduct amounted to open ridicule of Muhammad's Sunna .and Qur'anic norms

Now, through Yazid, reaction of the old Arabism was in direct confrontation against the Islamic action of Muhammad. This could be seen by such instances as when Yazid, during his father's reign, once came to Medina in the season of the Hajj and became badly intoxicated from wine-drinking. Ibn 'Abbas and Husayn happened to pass by him, whereupon Yazid called his servant and ordered him to serve wine to Husayn, insisting that the latter take it. When Husayn angrily refused and rose to leave, Yazid, :in his drunken stupor, sang

O my friend, how strange it is that I have invited you, but you do not accept, To" women singers, pleasures, wine, and music, And to a brimming full jar of wine on the .lip of which sits the master of the Arabs

And among them [the singing girls] there is one who has captured your heart, and she ".did not repent by doing this

:Husayn stood up and said

"But your heart, O son of Mu'awiya."(1)

Now this same Yazid was the Caliph of Islam and was asking Husayn to accept his authority. Husayn's acceptance of Yazid, with the latter's openly reactionary attitude against Islamic

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۱- Aghani XV, p.۲۳۳

norms, would not have meant merely a political arrangement, as had been the case with Hasan and Mu'awiya, but an endorsement of Yazid's character and way of life as well. This was unthinkable to the grandson of the Prophet, now the head of Muhammad's family and the embodiment of his Sunna.

In order to counteract this reaction against Islamic action, Husayn prepared his strategy. In his opinion he had the right, by virtue of his family and his own position therein, to guide the people and receive their respect. However, if this right were challenged, he was willing to sacrifice and die for his cause. He realized that mere force of arms would not have saved Islamic action and consciousness. To him it needed a shaking and jolting of hearts and feelings. This, he decided, could only be achieved through sacrifice and sufferings. This should not be difficult to understand, especially for those who fully appreciate the heroic deeds and sacrifices of, for example, Socrates and Joan of Arc, both of whom embraced death for their ideals, and above all of the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the redemption of mankind.

It is in this light that we should read Husayn's replies to those well-wishers who advised him not to go to Iraq. It also explains why Husayn took with him his women and children, though advised by Ibn 'Abbas that should he insist on his project, at least

he should not take his family with him. Aware of the extent

of the brutal nature of the reactionary forces, Husayn knew that after killing him the Umayyads would make his women and children captives and take them all the way from Kufa to Damascus. This caravan of captives of Muhammad's immediate family would publicize Husayn's message and would force the Muslims' hearts to ponder on the tragedy. It would make the Muslims think of the whole affair and would awaken their consciousness. This is exactly what happened. Husayn succeeded in his purpose. It is difficult today to evaluate exactly the impact of Husayn's action on Islamic morality and way of thinking, because it prevailed. Had Husayn not shaken and awakened Muslim consciousness by this method, who knows whether Yazid's way of life would have become standard behaviour in the Muslim community, endorsed and accepted by the grandson of the Prophet No doubt, even after Yazid kingship did prevail in Islam, and the character and behaviour in the personal lives of these kings was not very different from that of Yazid, but the change in thinking which prevailed after the sacrifice of Husayn always served as a line of distinction between Islamic .norms and the personal character of the rulers

Except for a few mediaeval writers committed to certain interests, Muslim historians and authors have always paid their utmost tribute in praising Husayn's heroic action. It is indeed encouraging that in modern times more and more Muslim scholars of all schools of thought have been contributing independent works to explain Husayn's philosophy of

sacrifice and martyrdom. Among the numerous books published in the past few decades, coinciding with the reawakening of the Muslim world, we would refer our readers to only two. One is by the famous Egyptian author 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad and entitled Abu ash-shuhada', al-Husayn b. Ali(١) (Father of Martyrs, Husayn b. 'Ali).

The other is by a great Lebanese scholar and shaykh, 'Abd Allah al-'Ala'ili, and is entitled Al-Imam al-Husayn, sumu'l-ma'na fi sumu'dhdhat.(۲) (The Imam Husayn, Loftiness of Purpose in a Lofty -Personality), a comprehensive study of Husayn's life, times, and martyrdom. Both writers, the former a secular scholar of history and philosophy, the latter a religious scholar of very high standing and scholarship, have discussed thoroughly the meaning, purpose, philosophy and the highest ideal of .Husayn's deed

Now we must turn to examine the second inference to be drawn from the outline of :the episode of Karbala given above

to determine the religious feelings of those who willingly gave their lives with Husayn. In describing the tragedy our sources do not fail to provide ample material on those doctrinal feelings which compelled the supporters of Husayn to choose to die with him rather than to live in peace and comfort, a choice which remained open to them even up to the last moment. This can be elucidated by examining those speeches and pledges of loyalty made by these persons on several occasions. It is also illustrated by that war poetry in rajaz (verbal duels) which was exchanged between the combatants of

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(.۲nd ed. (Cairo, n.d -۱

(۲nd ed. (Beirut, ۱۹۷۲ -۲

both sides. In Arabian warfare it was customary that when two combatants came to fight each other, each would declare his tribe, its deeds and status, and the stand for which he was going to fight. Only a few examples, however, from each of these three categories will be cited here to show that there was a particular doctrinal stand for .which the followers of Husayn stood and died

We have seen that Husayn's messenger Qays b. Mushir, whom he had sent from Hajir to inform the Kufans of his arrival, was arrested at al-Qadisiya and sent to Ibn Ziyad for trial. The governor ordered him to go to the top of the palace and curse Husayn if he wanted to save his life. Qays used this opportunity to propagate his cause; he :addressed the people, saying

O people of Kufi. I am Husayn's messenger, and I declare before you that Husayn,“ the grandson of the Prophet, is the best man of his time among the men of God on earth and has better claims upon you than anyone else. It is therefore your duty to ”.respond to him

Qays then called for the curse of God upon Ibn Ziyad and God's blessing for 'Ali(۱) He was thereupon thrown to his death. If we compare Qays' attitude with that of Hujr b. 'Adi al-Kindi about twelve years earlier, mentioned in the preceding chapter, we find a consistent way of thinking which links them in an unbroken chain of Shi'i thought. Qays' introduction of

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Tabari, II, pp. ۲۸۸, ۳۰۳; Bidaya, VIII, pp. ۱۶۸, ۱۷۴ -۱

Husayn with special reference to his relationship with the Prophet and stating that he was the best man of God of his time on earth goes back to the ideas promulgated .from the very beginning by the supporters of 'Ali

As mentioned above, on the eve of 'Ashura (۹ Muharram) Ibn Sa'd ordered his forces to advance towards Husayn's camp after receiving Ibn Ziyad's orders for an immediate attack. Husayn sent his brother 'Abbas along with some leading followers to ask for a night's respite. After some argument this was granted, and 'Abbas

returned to inform Husayn; but Habib b. Muzahir and Zuhayr b. al-Qayn, who had come along with 'Abbas, remained behind to try to convince the Umayyad army of their wrongdoings. There are some useful dialogues recorded between these two :men and their opponents. Habib b. Muzahir spoke first to the enemy

By God, how evil and wretched those people will be when they appear before God" after killing the family and the Ahl al-Bayt of their own Prophet. The people of this sacred family are those who are the best worshippers of God and who spend their mornings striving in the devotion to God, devoting themselves to the best of His ".remembrance

:Azra b. Qays from the Umayyad side tauntingly replied

You go ahead with the purification of your soul as much as you like" (implying: "but do" :not try to convince us"). To this Zuhayr b. al-Qayn responded

O Azra! God has indeed purified our souls and has guided us. So"

p: ۲۸۷

fear God, O Azra, because I am one of your sincerest advisors. May God make you think, O Azra. Would you like to be one of. those who have fixed for themselves the path of error by killing these sacred and purified souls [Husayn and other members of "?[the Ahl al-Bayt

:Azra b. Qays again retorted

".O Zuhayr, you were not among the Shi'is of 'Ali, but were known to be an 'Uthmani"

:Zuhayr replied

(But now being with Husayn you must recognize that I am a Shi'i of 'Ali."(۱"

After this respite of only one night, and with all hopes gone, it was certain that the following morning would bring the summons of death for Husayn and his supporters. He gathered his companions and asked them to leave him alone as the enemy wanted nothing but his head. All the prominent companions and relatives of Husayn, in reply to his address, refused to leave him until all of them were killed. Perhaps we should avoid considering the pledges made on this occasion by the relatives of Husayn, like 'Abbas, his half-brother and others,(۲) which may be interpreted as the clannish loyalty to the head of the clan. We would, therefore, record here the pledges of those who had no blood, clan, or even tribal relationship with Husayn, but only ties .of religious or doctrinal loyalty

From among the followers of Husayn the aged Muslim b. 'Awsaja stood up and :exclaimed

How can we leave you? What excuse then will we have before God in discharging our"

Tabari, II, pp. ۳۱۸ f.; Bidaya, VIII, p. ۱۷۶, gives only a summary of the address of -۱ Habib b. Muzahir

For their pledges see Tabari, II, p.۳۲۲; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۹۴; Bidaya, VIII, p. - ۲
۱۷۶;Maqatil,p. ۱۱۲

duty towards you? No, by God, we will not depart from you. I will fight with you until (my last breath and until I die with you."(۱

:Then Sa'd b. 'Abd Allah al-Hanafi addressed Husayn, saying

By God, we will not depart from you until by sacrificing our lives we have proven to" God that we have faithfully fulfilled the duty we owe to the Prophet concerning you. By God, if I knew that I would be killed and then again be given a new life, and that then my body would be burned alive, all this being repeated seventy times, I would still not leave you until I died in front of you. And why should I not do that when I know .that I can only be killed once, leading to an everlasting honour and privilege

The last sentence in Bidaya reads:] By God, if I knew that I would be killed before you] a thousand times, and by this your life and the lives of the other Ahl al-Bayt would be saved, I would love to be killed a thousand times; but this is only to be killed once, (leading to an everlasting honour."(۲

After quoting a similar speech by Zuhayr b. al-Qayn, our sources say that all the companions of Husayn pronounced more or less in the same vein and declared their :complete loyalties to Husayn, saying

By God, we will never leave you alone until all of us are killed and our bodies are torn" to pieces. By this we

١- Tabari, loc. cit.; Bidaya, VIII, p.١٧٧. Mufid, Irshad, II, p.٩٥, gives a longer and more forceful version.

٢- Tabari, II, p ٣٢٢; Bidaya, VIII, p.١٧٧; Mufid, Irshad, II, p.٩٥

will have fulfilled our duties to you."(١)

The contents of all these statements and pledges provide very useful points with which to emphasize that religious urge which made the companions of Husayn so firm and enthusiastic, even at that moment of calamity. The points prevailing in these pledges are: ١: emphasis on Husayn's close and direct relationship with the Prophet, and not specifically with 'Ali; ٢: that to betray Husayn is to betray the Prophet, or similarly, that loyalty to Husayn is loyalty to Muhammad, the Prophet of God; ٣: that to give up Husayn is to denounce Islam, which was revealed by his grandfather, the Prophet; ۴: that betrayal of Husayn this day would cause them to perish on the Day of Judgement and would deprive them of the intercession of the Prophet. The essence of all three aspects, however, is that in their thinking there was an Imam or central authority who was the focal point for the love normally directed to the person of the Prophet himself.(٢)

On the day of 'Ashura, shortly before the fateful battle began, Hurr b. Yazid, a respected commander of the Umayyad army, the first who confronted Husayn and forced him to halt at Karbala as mentioned above, was himself now confronted by his own conscience and feelings. A great conflict arose in his mind: he was forced to choose between either wetting his hands in the sacred blood of the grandson of the Prophet or giving up his rank, power, and a bright

١- ibid.

٢- A. A. A. Fyzee, "Shi'i Legal Theories," Law in the Middle East, ed. Majid Khadduri and

H. J. Lesbesny (Washington, '۹۵۵), p.۱۱۳

career lying before him. His feelings ultimately won him over and he chose the latter. He suddenly spurred his horse towards Husayn's camp, threw himself at Husayn's feet, and exclaimed:

"O son of the Prophet! Here is the man who did you great injustice in detaining you at this place and causing you so much trouble. Is it possible for you to forgive a sinner like me? By God, I never imagined that these people would go so far as to shed the blood of the grandson of their Prophet. I only thought that they would accept one of these three options you offered; and thus some sort of reconciliation would ultimately prevail, and in this way I would be able to retain my rank and position. But now, when all hopes for peace are gone, I cannot buy Hell for this worldly gain. Forgive my mistake and allow me to sacrifice myself for you. Only by doing this can I redeem myself in the eyes of God for my sin against you."(۱)

Husayn embraced Hurr and said: "You are as free-born and noble (Hurr) as your mother named you." Hurr then at once went before the Umayyad army and addressed his fellow men in a long speech in favour of Husayn. Condemning their sacrilegious actions against the grandson of the Prophet, he put them to shame and reminded them of the Day of Judgement.(۲) Consequently, Hurr was among the first to give his life for Husayn. The defection of Hurr to

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۱- Tabari, II, pp.۳۳۳ f.; Mufid, Irshad, II, pp.۱۰۳ f. Bidaya, VIII, p. ۱۸۰, only summarises the statement of Hurr.

۲- See Tabari, loc. cit.; Mufid, loc. cit. Bidaya, VIII, pp. ۱۸۰ f., gives here the full text of Hurr's speech as in Tabari.

Husayn shortly before the battle began and his being killed by the Umayyad army is

as historical as the event of Karbala itself; to his defection all the sources bear .unanimous testimony

The physical defection of Hurr from the established order was, however, not of much importance. It was the principle on which Hurr defected from the Umayyad army which should be considered seriously. This was, perhaps, the greatest visible victory for the Shi'i point of view, for which the companions of Husayn were fighting to the death. The working of Hurr's mind at this last moment, as expressed in his statements mentioned above, was exactly the same as that of the companions of Husayn. This again supports the view that there was a particular way of thinking directed to the .Shi'i doctrine

Not of least importance in this connection are those rajaz verses exchanged ٥
between Husayn's companions and their opponents. Among the most illuminating are :the following

:The same Hurr, when engaged in battle, proclaimed :١

I will strike my sword on your heads in the cause of that Imam who is the best among" (all the inhabitants of Mecca."(١

Nafi' b. Hilal al-Jamali, of Husayn's camp, came forward and asked for his : ٢
:combatant, proclaiming

".(I am from the tribe of Banu Jamal, and I am of the religion of 'Ali (din 'Ali"

:From the opposite side one Muzahim b. Hurayth came forward, saying

".(I will fight with you; I am of the religion of 'Uthman (din Uthman"

:Nafi' retorted

No, you are of the religion of"

Tabari, II, p.۳۵۰; Bidaya, VIII, p.۱۸۳ -۱

(Satan."(۱)

:When Zuhayr b. al-Qayn came to fight he said :۳

I am Zuhayr, and I am the son of Qayn; I will defend and protect Husayn with my"
".sword

:Turning to Husayn he said

I will proceed leading to a rightly guided path the day when I meet your grandfather,“ the Prophet, [and the day] when I will meet Hasan and 'Ali al-Murtada and the one of (the two wings [reference to Ja'far at-Tayyar].”(٢

The war poetry in rajaz pronounced by the combatants of both sides, which has come down to us from reliable sources to be examined later, makes useful reading and provides important points. We have quoted only three of them for the sake of brevity. These pronouncements, however, sufficiently indicate that the Shi'i trend of thinking was fully active among those who chose to die with Husayn. The statement of Hurr that Husayn was an Imam, the best of all the residents of Mecca, and Nafi' and Zuhayr's declarations that they were of the religion of 'Ali and on the rightly guided path, are complete explanations in themselves and require no further comment. Yet the pronouncement of Husayn's followers that they were of the religion of 'Ali does not fail to suggest that they meant this term in a strictly religious sense, in contrast to those who had also called themselves by the same name at Al-Jamal, at Siffin, and on other occasions with 'Ali, but on political grounds, and who with the changing circumstances assimilated with the ruling majority who

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۱- Tabari, II, pp.٣۴٢, ٣۵٠; Mufid, Irshad, II, pp. ١٠۶ f. Bidaya naturally does not mention this final retort of Nafi'.

٢- Tabari, II, p. ٣٨٠; Bidaya, VIII, p.١٨٣

were now going to kill the son of 'Ali. On the other hand, by looking at all these quotations referred to above we find that throughout the incident of Karbala there had been a persistent and continuous doctrinal tendency among the followers of Husayn, based on their declaration of being of the religion of 'Ali. This very tendency in course of time, as we shall see later, was translated into a more elaborate form of Shi'i tenets and developed its own theological doctrine (kalam) and legal system (fiqh) in opposition to the rest of the Jama'a.

Commenting on the tragedy of Karbala, even a scholar like Philip Hitti lets himself write that "Shi'ism was born on the tenth of Muharram."(۱) All the information derived from our sources and all the evidence given above totally reject this view. Instead, a careful study of the material handed down to us from the sources of different schools of thought confirm the fact that the Shi'i doctrinal stand had been in evidence right from the time of the death of the Prophet, and the death of Husayn only "set the seal of an official ShT'ism."(۲)

For that purpose we have gone into the detail of citing from those speeches, pledges, and war poetry pronounced before the death of Husayn, all of which clearly demonstrates the nature of the existing tendencies prevailing before the tragedy occurred. What is really true to say, however, is that the tragedy did play an immensely important role, not in the

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۱- History of the Arabs, p.۱۹۱

۲- Fyzee, op. cit., p.۱۱۳

creation of Shi'ism, but in the consolidation of the Shi'I identity. The fate of Husayn was destined to become the most effective agent in the propagation and comparatively rapid spread of Shi'ism. It is also undoubtedly true that the tragedy added to Shi'i Islam an element of "passion", which renders human psychology more receptive to doctrine than anything else. Henceforth we find that this element of "passion" becomes a characteristic feature of the Shi'is.

The tragedy of Karbala in its immediate and far-reaching consequences created three thousand Tawwabun (penitents) who let themselves die as a way of repenting for their inability to fulfil their commitments to the grandson of the Prophet. It provided a ground from which Mukhtar was able to launch his movement. It provided an effective slogan to the 'Abbasids for overthrowing the Umayyad regime. And ultimately, the name and memory of Husayn became an inseparable part of Shi'i

(moral and religious fervour.(1)

A brief comment on the authenticity of the sources of our information for the whole account of Karbala, including the speeches, pledges, and rajaz material pronounced by the supporters of Husayn, is in order. The main source of our knowledge of the tragedy is Abu Mikhnaf Lut b. Yahya (died I ۵۷/۷۷۴) the first to produce a comprehensive account of Karbala. This work was entitled Maqtal al-Husayn, and in the list of Abu Mikhnaf's numerous works this one is unanimously mentioned by all (bibliographers.(2)

Abu Mikhnaf, one of the earliest and best Arab historians, has been thoroughly

1- cf. Hodgson, "How Did the Early Shi'a become Sectarian?" p.۳

2- Ibn Nadim, Fihrist, p.۹۳; Tusi, Fihrist, Nos. ۱۵۵, ۲۸۲; Najashi, Rijal, p.۲۴۵; Ahlwardt, Nos. ۹۰۲۸-۹ ۹۰۳۱-۸; Ursula Sezgin, Abu Mikhnaf Ein Beitrag zur Historiographie der Umaiyadischen Zeit (Leiden, ۱۹۷۱), pp. ۱۱۶-۲۳, a discussion of the Maqtal itself. On Tusi and his Fihrist, see Sprenger's preface to his edition of this work in the Bibliotheca Indica (Calcutta, ۱۸۵۳), and Brown's discussion of biographical authorities in A Literary History of Persia (Cambridge, ۱۹۰۲-۴), IV, pp. ۳۵۵۵. On Najashi also see Brown, loc. cit.

and critically studied by scholars such as Welihausen(1) and others, and recently by Ursula Sezgin in an admirable work entitled Abu Mikhnaf(2) All have found him generally the most reliable and authentic writer on the annals of Kufa and Iraq under the Umayyads. It is now established that, as a rule, he does not take his material from predecessors or far-distant sources, but rather collects it himself by enquiring in the most diverse directions from all possible people who could have first-hand information or who had been present to see and hear for themselves. The chain of transmitters with him is a reality and not merely a literary form, and it is always very

short. Writing shortly after the events he describes, Abu Mikhnaf often relates from an eyewitness account with only one intermediary between himself and his source.(۳) Gibb suggests that Abu Mikhnaf presents an Iraqi or Ku fan, rather than purely Shi'i!, point of view in his narratives.(۴) In this his sympathies are no doubt on the side of Iraq against Syria; for 'Ali, against the Umayyads. Yet in the opinion of Welihausen there is not much of a bias noticeable, at least not so much as to positively falsify (fact.(۵

The Maqtal of Abu Mikhnaf has come to us through numerous sources. It is, however, Tabari who used this work in full for the first time and thus becomes our main source of the text. In most cases Tabari quotes Abu Mikhnaf directly, but quite a few traditions

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۱- See his preface to The Arab Kingdom and its Fall

۲- See above, note ۸۷

۳- Wellhausen, loc. cit.

۴- 'El۲ article "Abu Mikhnaf

۵- Wellhausen, loc. cit.

he quotes from Hisham b. Muhammad al-Kalbi, most of these, no doubt, going back to Abu Mikhnaf himself. Tabari sometimes begins his narrative by saying: "Abu Mikhnaf said from so-and-so..."; and other times by saying: "Hisham (b. al-Kalbi) said from Abu Mikhnaf from so-and-so...,, This indicates that in the former case Tabari is quoting directly from Abu Mikhnaf's work, while in the latter he quotes Abu Mikhnaf in the recension of Ibn al-Kalbi. Besides Abu Mikhnaf and Ibn al-Kalbi, Tabari also quotes quite a few traditions transmitted from other traditionists, which add a few variants to the preceding ones and in most cases confirm Abu Mikhnaf.

Another source for Abu Mikhnaf is Baladhuri (died ۲۷۹/۸۹۲-۸۹۳), whose Ansab al-ashraf pertaining to Husayn has not yet been published, but has been used by Veccia Vaglieri in her long and thorough article on Husayn in the new edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam. Vaglieri finds that "Al-Baladhuri almost always used the same sources as At-Tabari, but often made resumes of them, introducing them by qalu (they said), and he provides some additional verses." Our own examination of the manuscript leads us to agree with her findings, thus detailed references to the Ansab manuscript seem unnecessary.(۱)

Besides these two, who have used Abu Mikhnaf in full, we have also referred to Ibn Kathir (died ۷۷۴/۱۳۷۲-۱۳۷۳), a pupil of Ibn Taymiyya and a committed Sunni of the Syrian school, often very critical of the Shi'i, whom he often refers to as the Rawafid. Ibn Kathir, often selective,

p: ۲۹۷

۱- In the Istanbul Ms. of the Ansab, Husayn is discussed in ML ۵۹۷, ff. ۲۱۹a-۲۵۱b

naturally ignores those parts of Abu Mikhnaf which are directly against his interests, such as the references to 'Uthman, etc.; otherwise he accepts most of the material of Abu Mikhnaf. On the other hand, early Shi'i writers, like Shaykh al-Mufid (born ۳۳۶/۹۴۷, died ۴۱۳/۱۰۲۲) in his Irshad, and others, relate the tragedy of Karbala, apart from Abu Mikhnaf from their own sources, often going back to 'Ali b. al-Husayn. This son of Husayn, twenty-three years old when he was present at Karbala, could not take part in the battle due to his illness and was thus saved from the general massacre. This makes him a major narrator of the tragedy. It is indeed very interesting and useful to note that in general outline and in all the major events, the renderings of Shaykh al-Mufid, a very committed die-hard Shi'i, are closely paralleled by those of the Syrian Ibn Kathir.

In examining Abu Mikhnaf's Maqtal al-Husayn one must particularly take into consideration the time factor to the author's advantage. We do not know precisely the

date of his birth, but at the rising of Ibn Ash'ath against Hajjaj in ۸۰-۸۲/۶۹۹-۷۰۱,(۱) Abu Mikhnaf had already reached manhood.(۲)

The tragedy of Karbala took place in ۶۱/۶۸۰. This means that Abu Mikhnaf must have been born about the year of the tragedy, and at the time of Ibn al-Ash'ath's revolt he must have been somewhere between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two. It is certain that many of those who took active part in the battle

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۱ - For his revolt see Veccia Vaglieri, EI۲ article "Ibn al-Ash'ath", and sources cited therein.

۲- Welihausen, op. cit., p. vii

of Karbala on the Umayyad side were still living, and thus the author had the opportunity of meeting and interviewing personally those who had witnessed the event themselves. For this reason, in the Maqtal Abu Mikhnaf cites his authority with the clear observation wa kana qad shahida qatl al-Husayn (and he witnessed the murder of Husayn). Without exception, throughout his narrative he uses the verb haddathani (he told me); and if his report is not directly from an eyewitness, he cites only one or two intermediaries who had received the account from the eyewitness himself. Thus in our quotations above concerning the statements of loyalty, pledges, and rajaz, the isnad runs:

۱: Abu Mikhnaf-Muhammad b. Qays (eyewitness).

۲: Abu Mikhnaf-Harith b.Hasira and 'Abd Allah b. Sharik al-'Amiri (eyewitnesses).

۳: Abu Mikhnaf-'Abd Allah b. 'Asim and Dahhak b. 'Abd Allah (eyewitnesses).

.(Abu Mikhnaf-Abu Jana-b al-Kalbi and 'Adi b. Hurmula (eyewitnesses :۴

(Abu Mikhnaf-Muhammad b. Qays (eyewitness).(۱ :۵

Often he further strengthens his isnad by citing more than one eyewitness, for instance in ۲, ۳, and ۴ above. Reporting the pledges of the supporters of Husayn on the night of 'Ashura, he says that 'Ali b. al-Husayn said: "I was lying sick in my bed and ".heard my father's speech and the replies of his supporters thereto

The Maqtal al-Husayn of Abu Mikhnaf must have soon received widespread popularity, and numerous copies must have been made and circulated. This is evident from an examination of the isnads and reference to sources in which the work is used by other

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See Tabari, index -۱

authors. Tabari source was no doubt mainly Hisham b. al-Kalbi directly. But Mufid, Abi'l Faraj (Maqatil al- Talibiyin), Ibn Kathir, and many others give different sources and names through whom the work reached them. For example, Mufid often begins his narrative with the prefatory comment: "What is reported by Al-Kalbi, Al-Mada'ini, and (others than these two from among the biographers (ashab a-b as-Siyar)."(۱

Similarly, Abu'l-Faraj quotes Abu Mikhnaf from Ibn al-Kalbi and Mada'ini, and additionally from sources such as Husayn b. Nasr, the son of the famous Nasr b. Muzahim al-Minqari, the author of Waq'at and 'Awana, the famous historian. Abu'l-Faraj alone uses about five different isnads going back to Abu Mikhnaf, and quite a

few other independent isnads going back to 'Ali b. al-Husayn, and then as usual summarises the accounts of all of them together. Basically, however, Abu'l-Faraj's source for Abu Mikhnaf is Mada'ini.(۲) Likewise still other authorities and different sources are given by Ibn Kathir, through whom he was able to use Abu Mikhnaf.(۳)

Mention must finally be made of the four manuscripts of the Maqtal, located at Gotha (No.۱۸۳۶), Berlin (Sprenger, Nos. ۱۵۹-۱۶۰), Leiden (No.۷۹۲), and St. Petersburg (Am No. ۷۸). It was from the first two that Ferdinand Wustenfeld made a German translation of the work entitled Der Tod des Husein Ben 'Ali und die Rache (Gottingen, ۱۸۸۳). Wustenfeld, while convinced of the early origin of these manuscripts, doubts that the author was Abu Mikhnaf.(۴) The foremost argument he puts forward is that it contains some

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۱- e.g. Mufid, Irshad, II, p.۲۹

۲- See Maqatil, p.۹۵

۳- See Bidaya, VIII, pp.۶۰, ۶۱

۴- See Der Tod des Husein, Wustenfeld's preface

miraculous and supernatural types of stories, such as terrible manifestations of grief in natural phenomena: reddening skies, bleeding sands, and so forth. Ursula Sezgin questions Wustenfeld's criticism at several points and suggests that while the existing manuscripts may be the recensions or rewritings made by some later unknown writers, the fact remains that Tabari's main source of Abu Mikhnaf was Ibn al-Kalbi.(۱)

However, some of these miraculous stories or fantasies have found a place even in Tabari, which suggests that these might have been originally written by Abu Mikhnaf himself or may have been incorporated by Ibn al-Kalbi when he rewrote his master's work. But to cast doubts on Abu Mikhnaf's authorship of the Maqtal only on the

grounds that some supernatural and miraculous events are recorded, as Wustenfeld is inclined to suggest, would mean to ignore certain tendencies of the age. It would perhaps be a grave error to expect that a book written in the early eighth century about a great religious personality would not accept supernatural occurrences as a matter of course, especially when the main event itself is so charged with emotion and suffering. The Near East has produced an enormous number of books on the miracles of saints and holy men, and it would be strange indeed if Islam had not followed in the footsteps of its predecessors in glorifying the deeds of its Prophet and .his family, even at the expense of their human greatness

Moreover, as explained in the first chapter, the Arabs always believed

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Sezgin, Abu Mikhnaf pp.۱۹۰ ff -۱

in certain supernatural powers endowed on some sacerdotal families. Similarly, certain reactions of natural elements in certain conditions were also a commonplace factor in the system of Arab beliefs. After the Arabs' conversion to Islam, the miraculous stories were growing in narration right from the time of the Prophet, to .which the Sira of Ibn Hisham bears testimony

The most extraordinary circumstances of Husayn's death, immediately followed by the Tawwabun Movement highly charged with passion and remorse, and the propaganda carried out by the Tawwabun and by Al-Mukhtar naturally produced some supernatural stories alongside the accounts of the tragedy. We can, therefore, conclude that even if a few popular legends and supernatural events related to the tragedy are described in the Maqtal, this does not mean that the work is not of Abu Mikhnaf's authorship, nor that the whole account is unreliable. The inclusion of such stories does not eclipse the fact that the Maqtal also contains and comprises the

efforts of a prominent Arab historian to collect and preserve the most reliable and the most contemporary historical accounts of Husayn's martyrdom available to scholarship at a time when many participants in the events were still alive and able to contribute their knowledge to Abu Mikhnaf's research.

Chapter ۸: The Reaction after Karbala

The martyrdom of Husayn was of great religious significance and had a deep heart-searching after-effect upon the Shi'is, giving a new turn to the mode and nature of the Shi'I movement. The tragic fate of the grandson of the Prophet stirred religious and

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moral sentiments, particularly among those of the Kufan followers of the House of the Prophet who had so zealously asked Husayn to come to Iraq to guide them on what they considered to be the path of God. But when Husayn came to Iraq they did not or could not stand with him in the hour of trial. Soon afterwards, however, they realized that their inability, or rather weakness, had been the cause of the tragedy. A deep sense of repentance set in, provoking their religious conscience; and in order to expiate their negligence and obtain God's forgiveness, they thought they must make similar sacrifices. They believed that they could only prove their real repentance by exposing themselves to death while seeking vengeance for the blood of Husayn.

Hence they named themselves the Tawwabun (penitents) and are known in Islamic history by this self-imposed title.(۱) This movement, as will be seen below, proved to be an important step forward in the consolidation of Shi'i Islam.

The movement began under the leadership of five of the oldest and most trusted associates of 'Ali, with a following of a hundred diehard and devoted Shi'is of Kufa, none of whom was below sixty years of age.(۲) This age factor should particularly be noted, as it indicates the maturity of their religious thinking and behaviour. The five leaders of the movement, Sulayman b. Surad al-Khuza'i, Al-Musayyab b. Najaba al-Fazari; 'Abd Allah b. Sa'd b. Nufayl al-Azdi, Abd

Allah b. Walin at-Tami, and Rifa'a b. Shaddad al-Bajali; had

۱- Baladhuri, V, pp.۲۰۴ ff.; Tabari, II, p.۴۹۷; Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p.۹۳; Welihausen, Die religios politischen Oppositionsparteien im alten Islam trans. 'Abd ar-Rahman Badawi, Ahzab al-mu'arada as- siyasiya al-diniya fi sadr al-Islam (Cairo, ۱۹۶۸), p. ۱۸۹

۲- Tabari, II, p. ۴۹۸; Welihausen, loc. cit.

always been in the forefront of all Shi'i activities in Kufa, and were highly respected by the Shi'a for their sincerity of purpose and unshaken devotion to the cause of the Ahl al-Bayt. Similarly, the other hundred who joined these leaders of the movement are described as “the most select from among the followers of 'Ali”.(۱) Towards the end of ۶۱/۶۸۰ they held their first meeting in the house of Sulayman b. Surad.(۲) This was the first opportunity for them to come out from their hiding places and meet together, since the state of martial ۱۸W imposed on Kufa before the massacre at Karbala had now been relaxed.

Detailed accounts of this first meeting and the passionate speeches made by these five leaders are preserved for us by the sources. The first to speak was Al-Musayyab b. Najaba al-

:Fazari He said

We invited the son of the daughter of our Prophet to come to Kufa to guide us on the" right path, but when he responded to our call we became greedy for our own lives until he was killed in our midst. What excuse would we have before our Lord, and before our Prophet when we meet him on the Day of Resurrection, while his most beloved son, family, and progeny were massacred in our midst. By God, there is no other way for us to expiate ourselves for the sin except to kill all his murderers and their associates or be killed. Perhaps by doing so our Lord may forgive

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۱- Tabari, II, p. ۴۹۸; Baladhuri, V, pp.۲۰۴ f.

۲- Tabari, II, p.۴۹۷; Baladhuri, loc. cit.

our sin. You must, therefore, now select someone from among you as your leader, who can organize and mobilize you under his command and proceed with the plan of seeking God's forgiveness by taking the action which has been proposed."(۱)

Rifa'a b. Shaddad al-Bajali, another senior member of the five leaders, then spoke, appealing passionately to the religious sentiments of those present. After emphasizing further what Al-Musayyab had said, he proposed:

Let us give command of our affairs to Shaykh ash-Shi'a, the companion of the" Prophet, possessor of priority in Islam, Sulayman b. Surad, the one praised for his intrepidity and for his religion and the one who has been dependable and reliable in his judiciousness and prudence (Hazm)."(۲)

The other three leaders named above spoke in the same vein and seconded the

proposal to chooose Sulayman as their leader on the same grounds as mentioned by Rifa'a. It is important to note that the qualifications for the leadership of the movement, which was indeed dedicated to the Shi'i cause, were companionship with the Prophet and priority or precedence in Islam (sabiqa). This, like many other instances, means that the main emphasis of the Shi'is was to enforce the Islamic ideal, which they thought could only be achieved through the Ahl al-Bayt, the people nearest to the Prophet. Sulayman b. Surad, accepting the responsibility of leading the movement, made a forceful speech in which he laid down the severest standards required of those who wanted to participate and emphasized that they should be

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۱- Tabari, II, p. ۴۹۸; Baladhuri, V, p.۲۰۵

۲- Tabari, II, p.۴۹۹; Baladhuri, loc. cit.

ready to sacrifice their lives for the noblest task ahead of them.(۱)

The response from all those present was equally enthusiastic. They pledged to seek God's pardon by fighting to the death the killers of the grandson of the Prophet. In order to prove the purity of their intentions many of them willed all of their properties and possessions, except for arms, as Sadaqat for the Muslims. Sulayman appointed 'Abd Allah b. Walin at-Taymi as the treasurer to collect the contributions made by the Shi'a and to use the money for the preparation of the mission.(۲)

With no loss of time Sulayman undertook the organization of the movement. He entered into correspondence with Shi'I leaders in other cities, namely with Sa'd b. Hudhayfa al-Yaman in Al-Mada'in and Al-Muthanna b. Mukharriba al-'Abdi in Basra. The movement, however, went on secretly for about three years, increasing in numbers and strength and waiting for an appropriate time and opportunity.

Circumstances took a sudden turn in favour of the movement with the unexpected death of Yazid in ۶۴/۶۸۳, encouraging the Tawwabun to come out in the open. Some of the leading members urged Sulayman to rise publicly, Oust 'Amr b. Hurayth, deputy of 'Abd Allah b. Ziyad, from the city, pursue those responsible for the blood of Husayn, and call the people to support the Ahl al-Bayt Sulayman, however, opted for a more restrained policy, pointing out that the murderers of Husayn were in fact the ashraf al-qaba'il of Kufa, who would have to pay for

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۱- Tabari, II, pp.۴۹۹ f.; Baladhuri, V, pp.۲۰۵ f.

۲- Tabari, loc. cit.; Baladhuri, loc. cit.

his blood. If the action wereimmediately directed against them, they would become very oppressive; and a revolt against them at this stage would achieve nothing but disaster or even the complete destruction of the Shi'is themselves. The purpose of avenging the blood of Husayn would be lost. It would therefore be advisable, at his stage, to intensify their propaganda campaign only among their own Shi'is and among others throughout Kufa, enlisting as much support as possible. He added that since Yazid was now dead the people would join them more readily and quickly.(۱) Sulayman's suggestion prevailed and the movement, so far a secret organization, came into the open with an intensified campaign on a large scale. A number of emissaries began ceaselessly working to invite people to join the movement.

Abu Mikhnaf has preserved for us a speech of one of these emissaries, 'Ubayd Allah al-Murri. It is reported from a man of Muzayna, who said he heard it so many times that he learned it by heart. The narrator further comments that he had never seen anyone in his time more eloquent than Al-Murri, and that the latter would never miss an opportunity to preach if he happened to see a group of people. He would begin by praising God and praying for His messenger. Then

he would say:

God chose Muhammad from among all His creatures for His Prophethood; He singled" him out for all of His bounties. God strengthened you by making you his followers and honoured you with having

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Tabari, II, pp. ۵۰۶-۷ -۱

faith in him; through Muhammad, God saved you from the shedding of blood, and through him He made your dangerous paths safe and peaceful. 'You were on the brink of the pit of Fire and God saved you from it. Thus God makes His signs clear to you. Perhaps you may be guided.' (Qur'an, III, ۱۰۳). Has God created anyone from the first to the last with greater right over this Umma than its Prophet? Has the offspring of anyone from among the Prophets or the Messengers or anyone else greater right over this Umma than the offspring of its own Prophet? No, by God, this has never been the case, nor will it ever be. [O you people], you belong to God. Don't you see, don't you understand what a crime you have committed against the son of the daughter of your Prophet? Don't you see the people's violation of his sanctity, their slackness towards him while he was lonely and helpless, and their staining him with ?blood

They were pulling him violently on the ground, not thinking of God in regard of him nor his relationship to the Prophet. Eyes have never before seen the like of this. By God, Husayn b. 'Ali, what a betrayal of truth, forbearance, trust, nobility, and resolution: the son of the first Muslim in Islam and the son of the daughter of the Messenger of the Lord of the Worlds. Around him his defenders were few, and his attackers were in .multitudes

His enemies killed him while his friends deserted him. Woe to the killers and reproaches to the deserters! God will accept no excuse from those who killed him, nor

any argument from those who deserted him except that the latter should sincerely repent before God and fight against the killers and repudiate and eliminate the unjust and the corrupt. Only then, perhaps, God may accept our repentance and remove our guilt. We invite you to the Book of God and the Sunna of his Prophet, to vengeance for the blood of his [Prophet's] family and to war on the heretics and deviators from the true religion. If we are killed, there is nothing better for the pious than to be with their God; if we are successful, we will restore power to the Ahl al-Bayt of our Prophet.”(۱)

In all the preceding chapters dealing with the developments from the time of the death of the Prophet till the death of Husayn, the Shi'i doctrinal stand and their religio-political aspirations have repeatedly been pointed out. If we recall the arguments put forward by the supporters of 'All on the occasions of the Saqifa and the Shura, the contents of the letters written by Hasan to Mu'awiya and that of Husayn to the Shi'is of Kufa and Basra, the pledges and statements made by the supporters of Husayn at Karbala, and the speeches delivered by the leaders of the Tawwabun in their first meeting, Al-Murri's exhortations can be seen as nothing other than

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۱- Tabari, II, pp. ۵۰۷-۸

an echoing of the same ideals. It would suffice to say that throughout Al-Murri's speech the main emphasis is laid on Husayn's relationship with the Prophet through Fatima. The name of 'Ali appears only twice: the first time in Husayn's name as “Husayn b. 'Ali”, which was a usual way of describing anyone, and the second when Husayn is mentioned as “the son of the first Muslim”, but even in this his position as “the son of the daughter of our Prophet” is immediately referred to. (Even at the time of the Saqifa and the Shura the main emphasis was on 'Ali's nearness and close association and relationship with the Prophet.) Thus the Tawwabun put far more emphasis on the idea of succession to the Prophet by blood than to 'Ali by blood. The main part of the speech, that to kill the murderers of Husayn in order to avenge his

blood or be killed in order to expiate their failure in supporting

Husayn, and thus to seek God's forgiveness, was a new dimension necessitated by the tragedy of Karbala. Finally, a call to the Book of God and the Sunna of the Prophet, as has been pointed out earlier, was an implicit rejection of the precedent of the first three caliphs and thereby gave 'Ali and other Imams of the family of the Prophet exclusive authority to interpret or reinterpret the Prophetic Sunna.

The campaign of the Tawwabun, however, succeeded in gaining the support of i۶,ooo Kufans,(۱) since the situation in

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۱- Baladhuri, V, p. ۲۵۸

Kufa was much more conducive to success now than ever before. The sudden death of Yazid greatly weakened Umayyad control of the province. The sickly son of Yazid, Mu'awiya II, succeeded his father only six months before his own death, and the old Marwan b. al-Hakam managed to become the new Umayyad caliph. In Syria this led to a bloody conflict between the two rival tribal groups of Kalb and Qays, leaving the Umayyad capital in chaos and unable to maintain its firm control over neighbouring Iraq. In the Hijaz, 'Abd Allah b. az-Zubayr, who had already put forward his own claims to the caliphate and was taking advantage of Yazid's death and of Syrian confusion and weakness, organized and consolidated his power afresh and assumed the title of Amir al-Mu'minin. The Umayyad governor and the strong man, 'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad, who resided in Basra as the governor of both Kufa and Basra, was expelled by a rebellion of the inhabitants of the latter city and fled to Marwan in Syria.

The Kufans, on their part, ousted 'Amr b. al-Hurayth, the deputy of Ibn Ziyad in Kufa.(۱) In the power vacuum, the ashraf of Kufa promptly wrote to 'Abd Allah b. az-

Zubayr to take advantage of the situation and appoint his governor. With the Shi'i groups emerging and the Syrian domination weakening, the tribal and clan leaders of Kufa found it in their interest to align themselves with Ibn az-Zubayr, who represented the old Meccan-Qurayshite hegemony. Ibn az-Zubayr immediately sent

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Baladhuri, V. p. ٢٠٧ -١

to Kufa 'Abd Allah b. Yazid al-Ansari as his governor in charge of military affairs, and Ibrahim b. Muhammad b. Talha in charge of the kharaj.(١)

Now with the obstacles removed, Sulayman b. Surad started final preparations for action. He wrote to the Shi'I leaders in Al-Mada'in and Basra, calling them to be ready to rise to avenge the blood of Husayn and to put right the affairs which had gone wrong and had become unjust. He asked them to meet at Nukhayla, outside Ku fa, on the first of Rabi' II of the next year, ۶۵/۶۸۴. The Shi'i leader in Al-Mada'in, Sa'd b. Hudhayfa b. al-Yaman, called in the Shi'a of that region and read the letter to them and received an enthusiastic response. The Shi'i leader in Basra, Al-Muthanna b. Mukharriba al-'Abdi, also accepted the call and mobilized the Shi'is of that city. The long texts of these letters,(٢) which Abu Mikhnaf has meticulously preserved for us, make extremely useful and revealing reading for an understanding of the religious sentiments and feelings and the doctrinal stand of the Shi'a of this period. In essence these are much the same as the speeches of the Tawwabun and that of Al-Murri.

At this stage, Al-Mukhtar b. Abi 'Ubayda ath-Thaqafi, also a devoted follower of the Ahl al-Bayt, appeared in Kufa. His mission was the same as that of the Tawwabun insofar as the revenge for the blood of Husayn and establishing the rights of the Ahl al-Bayt were concerned, but differed

Baladhuri, V, p.۲۰۷; Tabari, II, p.۵۰۹ -۱

Tabari, II, pp.۵۰۲-s -۲

in that he wanted td achieve political authority through a more organized military power. Mukhtar, therefore, tried to persuade the Tawwabun not to take any hasty action and to join him for a better chance of success. The Tawwabun refused to join Mukhtar, as they had no wish to participate in any doubtful adventure or to deviate from their main purpose of atonement through sacrifice. They said that they would (follow only Shaykh ash-Shia Sulayman b. Surad.(۱)

Two points in. Mukhtar's arguments with the Tawwabun are worth noting here, since they reveal fundamental differences between them. Mukhtar said that firstly Sulayman did not know how to organize the military for warfare, nor did he have any knowledge of diplomacy or politics; secondly, Mukhtar had been appointed by the Mahdi, Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya, as his deputy, confidant, and minister to avenge the blood of Husayn.(۲) (Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya was 'Ali's third son from a Hanafite woman, and was not a descendant of the Prophet.) The refusal of the Tawwabun to support Mukhtar on these grounds indicates that they were interested neither in purely military ventures nor in political affairs; nor were they ready to accept even the eldest surviving son of 'Ali as their Imam, as he was not the direct descendant of the Prophet through Fatima. Thus the disagreement over strategy or tactics was .secondary to the disagreement over the Imam

Though the Tawwabun did not openly proclaim any particular member of the Ahl al-Bayt as their Imam, there are strong

Baladhuri, V, p.۲۰۷; Tabari, II, p.۵۰۹ -۱

.Baladhuri, loc. cit.; Tabari, loc. cit -۲

indications that they believed that the rightful Imam was now Husayn's surviving son 'Ali, later known as Zayn al- 'Abidin. There are many factors that support this view. Firstly, the very idea of the leadership based in the hereditary sanctity, which attracted the Arabs of Shi'i tendency, was still confined to the progeny of Muhammad through Fatima; it had been transferred from Hasan to Husayn and not to any other .member of the Hashimite clan

It has repeatedly been pointed out in what we have discussed so far that only rarely are Hasan and Husayn described as the sons of 'Ali; they were much more frequently referred to as "the son of the daughter of our Prophet". Secondly, the name of Muhammad b. al-i;١anaflya had not been cited at the time when the Tawwabun first held their meeting soon after Karbala in ۶۱/۶۸۰; Mukhtar arrived in Kufa after the death of Yazid in ۶۴/۶۸۴ and began his campaign in the name of Ibn al-Hanafiya. Thus the name of Ibn al-Hanafiya appeared for the first time four years later, when the Tawwabun were almost ready for action. Thirdly, even Mukhtar, who was the main progenitor of Ibn al-Hanafiya's leadership, first approached 'Ali b. al-Husayn, as will be seen later, and only when the latter refused to involve himself in any public .movement did Mukhtar turn to Ibn al-Hanafiya and ingratiate himself with his name

Since 'Ali b. al-Husayn himself refused to make any public claims or to allow any claims to be

made on his behalf, the Tawwabun refrained from mentioning his name. Nevertheless, since certain vague references made by the Tawwabun during their campaign, such as the verses composed by their poet, 'Abd Allah b. al-Ahmar, in which he speaks of "a caller who invited them to salvation",(۱) obviously refer to an Imam, and since the name of Ibn al-Hanafiya would not be associated with the imamate for another three years, the reference must have been to 'Ali b. al-Husayn. This is based on the fact that the Shi'a of Kufa had already established a precedent when they

proclaimed Hasan b. 'Ali, and not any other member of the Hashimite house, as the successor of his father. It seems also that the Tawwabun, after their sad experience vis-à-vis Husayn, decided not to put forward 'Ali b. al-Husayn's name for the leadership until they had been successful in throwing off Umayyad rule in Kufa or else sacrificing themselves in active repentance for their failure in carrying out their duties .with regard to Husayn

The main body of the Tawwabun, however, refused to join Mukhtar, though at least ۲,۰۰۰ of these who had registered their names with Sulayman did switch over to him, .obviously in the hope of better political prospects

As the time for action was approaching, Sulayman b. Surad and other leaders of the movement were putting more and more emphasis on disavowing any intention of political conquest and discouraged those who might have joined them for material benefits or worldly gains. According

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Mas'udi, Muruj ; III, p.۹۳ -۱

to their plan, in the beginning of Rabi' II, ۶۵/November, ۶۸۴, they raised their call for "revenge for the blood of Husayn (ya latha'rat al-Husayn)" and set out on their .mission

They gathered at Nukhayla, a suburb of Kufa, from where they had to march against the forces of 'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad, the Umayyad governor who had been responsible for the massacre at Karbala. The rigorous standards set by Sulayman b. Surad, however, proved to be too much for the majority of the volunteers: of the ۱۶,۰۰۰ who had registered themselves, only ۴,۰۰۰ came to the rendezvous at Nukhayla. The governor of Ibn al-Zubayr, 'Abd Allah b. Yazid, tried to dissuade them from carrying

out their plans and suggested to Sulayman that he wait until the former could prepare an army to join them. They refused to change their plan or to accept his help,(۱) as it would have compromised their whole position. Their intention was to avenge the blood of Husayn, to establish the Shi'i imamate or to die.

They were prepared to die rather than to have 'Abd Allah b. Yazid's non-Shi'i support. If they had accepted it they would have merely been joining one political faction, the supporters of Ibn az-Zubayr, against another, the Umayyads. Now, with the Tawwabun volunteers reduced from ۱۶,۰۰۰ to ۴,۰۰۰, they could hardly hope for any success except in fighting to the death and seeking atonement and repentance. They were determined to carry out their pledges to themselves.

They spent three days

۱- Tabari, II, pp.۵۴۳ f.; Baladhuri, V, p.۲۰۹

in prayer and remembrance of God at Nukhayla. The Shi'a from Al-Mada'in and Basra had not yet arrived, and some of those at Nukhayla wanted to await their arrival, but Sulayman insisted that they should proceed without further delay. He told them:

"There are two kinds of people. There are those who want the benefits of the hereafter, who hurry towards it and do not seek any worldly reward; and there are those whose acts are motivated by worldly gains. You are going for the benefits of the life hereafter: remember God in abundance in any situation and you will soon attain nearness to God and receive His best reward by fighting in His way and being patient in all calamities. Let us then proceed to our goal."(۱)

According to Baladhuri the people responded from all sides, “We are not seeking the world and we have not come out for it.”(۲) But in the morning another ۱,۰۰۰ were missing from his army. Sulayman was not discouraged and merely said that it was .better that such people should go

From Nukhayla the Tawwabun first went to Karbala to the grave of Husayn, where they gave themselves up to wild and unprecedented expressions of grief, weeping and wailing for the suffering and tragic death of the grandson of the Prophet.(۳) Welihausen points out that this was the first incidence of the glorification of the grave of Husayn and was purely Arabian in its character and nature since the Arabs were used to glorifying the Black

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Tabari, II, p.۵۴۵ -۱

Baladhuri, V, p.۲۰۹ -۲

Baladhuri, loc. cit.; Tabari, II, p. ۵۴۶; Welihausen, Ahzab, p.۱۹۴ -۳

Stone fixed in the Kaeba.(۱) After spending a day and night in mourning they left the .grave of Husayn

When they reached the village of Qarqisiya, the fifth stage from Karbala on the road to the Syrian border, they were generously entertained by the chief of the village, Zufar b. al-Harith, who informed them that 'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad, with a ۳۰,۰۰۰-man Syrian army, had reached 'Ayn al-Warda. The chieftain provided Sulayman with plenty of provisions and advised him further about 'Ubayd Allah's army and gave him the names of other leaders who were with him. Zufar also told Sulayman that he, along with his people, would fight the Syrians if the Tawwabun would stay with him .and use Qarqisiya as a base. But Sulayman did not agree

The Tawwabun ultimately reached 'Ayn al-Warda and engaged the Syrians fiercely, shouting, "Paradise! Paradise for the Turabites!" (٢) The battle lasted for three days, and the Tawwabun fought with unprecedented resolution, determination, and zeal. Even though greatly outnumbered, on the first day they inflicted heavy losses on the Syrians. On the second day, however, their own losses began to tell and their leaders fell one after the other. The first to be killed was Sulayman b. Surad himself, followed by Al-Musayyab b. Najaba, 'Abd Allah b. Sa'd b. Nufayl, and then 'Abd Allah b: Walin at-Taymi, each taking the leadership and the Tawwabun standard in succession one after the other. By the end of the third day the majority of the Tawwabun had fulfilled their

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١- Ahzab, p.١٩٤. Cf. Tabari, II, p. ٥۴۶; Baladhuri, V, p.٢٠٩

٢- Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p.٩۴. "Turabites": reference to Abu Turab, 'Ali's kunya.

pledge to sacrifice their lives in the name of Husayn. The only surviving leader, Rifa'a b. Shaddad, advised the handful of survivors to return, and while on their way back they were met by the Shi'is of Al-Mada'in and Basra, who had been coming to join them, but now turned back to Qarqisiya.(١)

In an attempt to analyse the Tawwabun movement, a few points are conspicuous. Firstly, all the ٣,٠٠٠ Tawwabun who fought in the battle were Arabs there were no mawali among them.(٢) It was Mukhtar who first mobilized the Persian mawali in active participation, thus giving the Shi'i movement a wider appeal. Secondly, among these ٣,٠٠٠ Tawwabun, though the majority were from South Arabian or Yemeni tribes, the northern and central Arabian tribes of Mudar and Rabi'a were by no means under-represented. In fact, the second in command, Al-Musayyab b. Najaba, was from Mudar. Looking at the names of some of the Tawwabun as given by the sources,(٣) one finds that many of the chief tribes of the Arabs of both Yemenis and

Nizaris were well represented. Thus Shi'i feelings were not confined to any single group of the Arabs. Thirdly, the penitent army included a very large number of the .original qurra' of Kufa,(۴) all the five leaders being among them

All of these facts, however, indicate two fundamental points. Firstly, the Shi'i movement till the time of the Tawwabun (۶۵/۶۸۴) was still purely Arabian in character and totally untouched by non-Arab elements, doctrinal or otherwise. And secondly, the

p: ۳۱۹

See the detailed account of 'Ayn al-Warda in Baladhuri, V, pp.۲۱۰ f.; Tabari, II, pp. -۱ ۵۵۸ ff; Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p.۹۴

Welihausen, Ahzab, p.۱۹۴ -۲

.See Tabari, II, pp.۴۹۷, ۵۵۹, ۵۶۶, ۵۹۹, ۶۰۱; Baladhuri, V, pp.۲۰۷ ff.; Welihausen, loc. cit -۳

.Welihausen, loc. cit -۴

movement of the Tawwabun was totally a religious affair. Husayn himself, when he met Yazid's army, was fully aware of his dignity as the grandson of the Prophet, as well as the son of 'Ali, and the Tawwabun by their action were certainly combining loyalty to 'Ali with loyalty to Muhammad himself, and thus were taking the matter strictly as a religious issue. Finally, if we compare the feeling and the expressions of those of the Shi'a who gave up their lives with Husayn at Karbala, as explained in the previous chapter, with the speeches and expressions made by the Tawwabun, recorded earlier in this chapter, we find that the arguments and sentiments of both .groups were based on the same religious principles

But there is a great difference between the two, however. At Karbala the presence of Husayn himself was a great personal obligation on the Shi'a who fought and were killed with him. In the case of the Tawwabun there was no personal binding force

which could keep them zealous enough to make them die except a strong feeling of duty and a deep sense of religious obligation. Thus the Tawwabun pushed Shi'ism .another step forward towards an independent and self-sustaining existence

Chapter ۹: The Struggle for Legitimacy

What has so far been said completes the first and fundamental phase in the history of the development of Shi'i Islam. In this phase a rather specific direction, a well-defined trend of thought, an ideal of polity, and an underlying principle of religious adherence were established

p: ۳۲۰

which can easily be distinguished as the Shi'i interpretation of Islam. Perhaps even at this early stage one can discern the basic difference between the Shi'a and the rest of the community, for while the former preferred to accept the leadership of only those who derived their authority directly from the person of the Prophet and in this way enjoyed divine sanction, the latter vested the authority for the leadership in the .community as a whole, which was thus entitled to choose the leader

With the death of Husayn, however, Shi'ism entered the second phase of its history. While the basic principle remained the same, disagreements arose over the specific criteria for deciding who the divinely inspired leader was, and this led to the internal division of Shi'i Islam. A study of the history of religions would show that a common

phenomenon of world religions and their factions has been that they always split over certain details when they enter the second phase of their development. Islam too, .and within it both the major groups of Shi'is and Sunnis, could not escape this fate

We have seen in the previous chapter that shortly before the Tawwabun marched against the Syrians, Mukhtar arrived in Kufa and tried to gain the support of Sulayman b. Surad and his followers for his own plan to rise against the Umayyads. The Tawwabun, however, refused to join him. The personality and character of Mukhtar have been subjected to a great controversy in early Shi'i history. Some sources

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present him as an ambitious adventurer seeking political authority for himself in the name of the Ahl al-Bayt. Others give him the benefit of the doubt and accept that his actions were in reality motivated by his love for the family of the Prophet, though his .approach and tactics were different from those of the Tawwabun

An exhaustive scrutiny of the sources may well prove that he was a devoted follower of the House of 'Ali and a sincere supporter of their cause, but whatever the case may be, the fact remains that he has generally been treated rather unsympathetically by the sources of different schools for different reasons. The Twelver Shi'i sources present him in an unfavourable light since it was he who for the first time began propaganda for the Imamate of Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya, thus deviating from the line of Fatima. The non-Shi'i sources, on the other hand, seem to have been influenced by the anti-Mukhtar propaganda launched by both the sympathizers of Ibn az-Zubayr and those of the Umayyads. No serious study has so far been done on Mukhtar, and the sketchy accounts given by some of the modern scholars(١) are generally influenced, without a critical assessment, by the sources usually hostile to him. Recently, however, Hodgson has hinted that the blackening of Mukhtar's reputation and the attempt to discredit him began from the time of his death.(٢)

The fact, however, remains that Mukhtar, in all probability due to the quiescent policy ,of Zayn al-'Abidin,-to be discussed below

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Welihausen, Ahzab, pp. ۱۹۸-۲۳۴; K. A. Fariq, The Story of an Arab Diplomat (New - ۱ (Dehli, ۱۹۶۷

Hodgson, "How Did the Early Shi'a Become Sectarian?", JAOS ('۹۵۵), p.۳ -۲

was responsible for shifting the Imamate from the descendants of the Prophet through Fatima to another son of 'Ali! Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya, thus creating the first deviation from the legitimist body of the Shi'a. The word legitimist may not be a good expression, but it is perhaps the nearest English approximation to the idea of a central body of the Shi'a, where the Imamate remained strictly restricted in the line of 'Ali and Fatima, coming from Hasan to Husayn and then through explicit nomination from father to son, usually to the eldest surviving son, until it ended with the twelfth Imam. Our intention in the following chapters is, therefore, to restrict our attention to the survey of this legitimist or central body of the Shi'a, which was reduced to an almost insignificant number after the death of Husayn by the newly emerging revolutionary or Messianic branches of the Shi'a. The use of the term legitimist and central body may seem at this stage arbitrary and a premature description of a later development; nevertheless, the fact remains that it was this legitimist faction which ultimately re-emerged as the largest and thus the central body of the Shi'a, and was eventually to be known as the Imamiya or Ithna-'ashariya (Twelver) Shi'a. The movement of Mukhtar and the idea of the Mahdi attached to the person of Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya, with its extremist and esoteric doctrines, or other .ramifications of the Shi'a, are therefore beyond the scope of this study

It may, however, be

pointed out here for future reference that from this time of the confusion in the leadership which followed the death of Husayn, this study has to address itself to two different questions: first, how legitimist Shi'ism maintained its separate identity without being absorbed into the emerging Sunni synthesis; and second, how it maintained its own character distinct from the revolutionary and extremist branches within Shi'ism itself. To resist the latter form of absorption was indeed more difficult, since extremist and revolutionary ideas are often more appealing than moderate .ones

As long as Husayn was alive the Shi'is remained united, considering him the only head and Imam of the House of the Prophet. But his sudden death and the quiescent attitude of his only surviving son 'Ali, more commonly known as Zayn al-'Abidin, left the Shi'a in confusion and created a vacuum in the active leadership of the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt. Thus the period following Husayn's death marks the first conflict over the leadership of the followers of 'Ali, resulting in the division of the Shi'a into .various groups

Ali Zayn al-'Abidin was the only one of the sons of Husayn whose life was spared' during the massacre at Karbala, since he did not take part in the fighting due to illness. He was at that time twenty-three years old.(۱) After his return from Karbala, Zayn al-'Abidin lived in Medina for most of his life, avoiding any political involvement as much as he could. The tragedy of Karbala left a deep

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۱- Ibn Sa'd,V,p.۲I۲

mark on him and it was only too natural that he bore a deep grudge against the

Umayyads, holding them responsible for the massacre of his father and all other family members. In spite of this feeling, however, he refrained from expressing any hostile attitude towards them. As a result, the Umayyads also tried to maintain good relations with him; in particular, Marwan b. al-Hakam and his son 'Abd al-Malik even showed a certain respect and affection for him.(١)

When the Medinese rose against Yazid b. Mu'awiya in the year ۶۲/۶۸۱, Zayn al-'Abidin, in order to emphasize his neutrality in the political struggle in the community, left Medina and went to stay on his estate outside the city.(٢) When Marwan, the governor of Medina, was compelled by the Medinese to leave the city, he took his wife to Zayn al-'Abidin and asked him to protect her. Zayn al-'Abidin demonstrated his magnanimity by accepting this responsibility; he sent her to Ta'if escorted by his son 'Abd Allah.(٣) When Yazid's army, led by Muslim b. 'Uqba however, defeated the Medinese in the battle of Harra, and sacked and looted the city, Zayn al-'Abidin and his family were left unmolested. Moreover, while all the Medinese were obliged to take a humiliating oath of allegiance, declaring themselves slaves of the Caliph Yazid, Zayn al-'Abidin was exempted.(۴) If this information, so widely reported by the sources, on the one hand illustrates the neutral policy of Zayn al-'Abidin, on the other hand it also indicated that the

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١- Ibn Sa'd, V, pp.۲۱۲, ۲۲۰; Tabari, II, p.۲۰۹

٢- Tabari, II, p.۲۲۰

٣- ibid.

۴- Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p.۷۰; Mubarrad, Kamil, I, p.۲۶۰; Dinawari, p. ۲۶۶

Umayyads, after killing Husayn, began to realize the respect and regard which the progeny of the Prophet commanded among the majority of the Muslims.

In the conflict between the Umayyads and 'Abd Allah b. az-Zubayr, Zayn al-'Abidin remained neutral. Ibn az-Zubayr did him no harm, but held him in Mecca under his supervision. Still another important factor in Zayn al-'Abidin's policy was his reserved attitude towards Mukhtar, who tried his best to gain his explicit support. Besides many approaches to Zayn al-'Abidin, which Mukhtar made while he was in the Hijaz, he even wrote a letter to Zayn al-'Abidin from Kufa, offering his allegiance.(۱) In avenging the blood of Husayn, Mukhtar beheaded most of those responsible for the tragedy.

The head of 'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad, the chief architect of the massacre at Karbala, was sent by Mukhtar to Zayn al-'Abidin, not to Ibn al-Hanafiya, and was delivered in a most dramatic manner.(۲) The son of Husayn is reported to have been seen so happy at that occasion that people said that they had never noticed him so elated since that tragedy at Karbala. Nevertheless, he continued his reserved and with-drawn attitude towards Mukhtar. The sources even report Zayn al-'Abidin as publicly denouncing Mukhtar in violent terms which seem to warrant serious examination.(۳) If these reports are correct, however, the reason for Zayn al-'Abidin's resentful attitude towards Mukhtar seems to have been the latter's proclamation of Ibn al-Hanafiya's imamate, which Zayn al-'Abidin considered as the usurpation of his own rights.

Shi'i sources

۱- Baladhuri; V, p.۲۷۲; Masudi, Muruj, III, ۷۴

۲- Ya'qubi, II, p.۲۵۹

۳- Baladhuri, V, p.۲۷۲; Ibn Sa'd, V, p.۲۱۳

record a number of traditions stating that Husayn expressly appointed Zayn al-'Abidin as his successor. The most commonly reported tradition in this connection is. that Husayn, before leaving for Iraq, entrusted Umm Salima, the widow of the Prophet, with his will and letters, enjoining her to hand them over td the eldest of his male offspring in case he himself did not return. Zayn al-'Abidin was the only son who came

back and so he was given his father's will and became his nominee.(١) Another tradition states that Husayn nominated Zayn al-'Abidin as his successor and the next Imam of the House of the Prophet just before he went out to meet the Umayyad forces for the last encounter at Karbala.(٢)

There is no criterion for an historian either to accept or to reject this sort of tradition. Perhaps the only guiding principle which may be used is the general tendency of the epoch and the common practice of the people of that period. Judging from this angle, we may recall our earlier comment in Chapter ٧ that Husayn, by virtue of his family and his own position therein as the grandson of the Prophet, thought that it was his right to be the Imam of the community. It would therefore be natural to think that he bequeathed his heritage to his son to maintain his family's tradition of leadership coming down from the Prophet. Nevertheless, the fact remains unchallenged that after Husayn's death the majority of the Shi'is followed Muhammad

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١- Muhammad b. Ya'qub al-Kulayni; Usul al-Kafi (Karachi, ١٩۶۵), I, p.٣۵٣; Majlisi, Bihar, XI, p.٧; 'Amili, A'yan, IV, p.٣٣٢. Also see Mas'udi; Muruj, III, p.٢٢۵

٢- Kulayni, loc. cit.

b. al-Hanafiya and not Zayn al-'Abidin, though the Tawwabun, as we have seen, thought of the latter as their prospective Imam. Even the remnants of the Tawwabun who survived the battle of 'Ayn al-Warda were attracted by Mukhtar to the side of Ibn al-Hanafrya.(١) The reason was obvious. The Shi'is in Kufa, especially the mawali among them, wanted an active movement which could relieve them from the oppressive rule of the Syrians. They found an outlet only under the banner of Mukhtar, and saw a ray of hope in the Messianic role propagated by him for Ibn al-Hanafiya.

On his part, Ibn al-Hanafiya did not repudiate Mukhtar's propaganda for his Imamate and Messianic role; he nevertheless maintained a carefully non-committal attitude and never openly raised his claims to the heritage of Husayn.(٢) It is indeed difficult to say whether Ibn al-Hanafiya's policy of not publicly laying claims to the leadership of the Shi'is was because of the serious risk such a claim would have entailed or because he was aware of the fact that he. was not the descendant of the Prophet. We have repeatedly pointed out throughout this work, from the event of Saqifa till the movement of the Tawwabun, that the main emphasis of the Shi'is regarding the leadership of the community has been focused upon the direct relationship to the .Prophet

With reference to Hasan and Husayn, we always find far more emphasis on the idea of succession to the Prophet by blood than to 'Ali by

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Ibn Khaldun, 'Ibar (Cairo, ١٨۶٧), III, p.١٧٢ -١

Baladhuri, V, p.٢١٨ -٢

blood. If all these overwhelming reports have any historic merit, then it seems very strange indeed that immediately after Husayn's death the emphasis has so suddenly changed from the lineage of the Prophet to that of 'Ali. It is, therefore, most probable that, besides political danger, Ibn al-Hanafiya, not being the descendant of the Prophet, was hesitant to claim the Imamate for himself. This also explains why Mukhtar was first so anxious to gain the support of Zayn al-'Abidin; and when he lost .all hopes of winning the son of Husayn, only then did he turn to Ibn al- Hanafiya

As for the other part of the problem, that is, how the Shi'is of Kufa so readily changed their attitude and accepted as their Imam a son of 'Ali who was not the descendant of the Prophet, whereas Zayn al-'Abidin was, some explanation must be sought. Perhaps the only answer to the riddle may be found in the fact that most of the original and main body of the Shi'a, with a clear doctrinal stand regarding the idea of the leadership, had been much reduced in number, first in the Karbala massacre with

Husayn, and then in the battle of 'Ayn al-Warda under the command of Sulayman b. .Surad al-Khuza'i

They were not only the hard core and well grounded in their Shi'i! ideals, but also provided intellectual and religious leadership and guidance to the masses of the Shi'a of Ku fa. After Karbala and 'Ayn al- Warda, what remained

in Kufa in the name of the Shi'a were mostly the wavering commoners of the Arabs and the mawali who in that desperate situation could not make the delicate doctrinal distinction between merely a son of 'Ali and a son of 'Ali from Fatima. To them, 'Ali was, after all, the cousin of the Prophet and also a member of the priestly clan of Hashim. That the sanctity of the Banu Hashim was confined to Muhammad after the Prophethood had been bestowed on him, to the exclusion of other members of the family of Hashim, as understood by the original body of the Shi'a, was lost among .these commoners

They were thus easily carried away by the talented eloquence of Mukhtar and his successful propaganda for Ibn al-Hanafiya as the deliverer (Mahdi) from the tyranny and injustice inflicted upon them by the Umayyads. It was, therefore, not so much the rights and personality of Ibn al-Hanafiya which made the masses of the Shi'is of Kufa accept him as Mahdi-Imam as it was their desperate yearning for a deliverer from Umayyad domination and oppressive rule. A careful examination of Mukhtar's propaganda for Ibn al-Hanafiya would show that the overriding emphasis in introducing him was on his role as Mahdi and not so much on his being the Imam. This .may prove to have been the main factor which attracted people to him

Once, however, the idea was implanted it found its way and swept away most of the unstable Shi'i masses. Once

it became a popular movement with certain hopes pinned to it, even some of the .remnants of the original Shi'a were also carried away

It is indeed difficult to resist what we may call a popular appeal and, especially in the situation prevalent in Iraq at that time, even some of the firm believers in the leadership of the descendant of the Prophet could not remain unaffected. Thus the Mahdism of Ibn al-Hanafiya soon became the order of the day among the Shi'is of Kufa. And, in course of time, the idea was popularly spread and accepted by the people and developed its own doctrines and dogma, legends and beliefs. It produced its own poets, such as Kuthayyir and Sayyid al- Himyari and others. The majority of the Shi'a thus in that particular period became the followers of the Mahdi-Imam (and not of the Imam only) attached to the person of Ibn al-Hanafiya, and eclipsed, though .only for a short period of time, the Imams from the line of Husayn

Being the son of Husayn and the eldest surviving descendant of the Prophet, Zayn al-'Abidin could not tolerate this situation for long. Though he maintained his quiescent policy of not getting involved in any politico-religious movement, he nevertheless resisted the acceptance of Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya as the Imam, and the latter's own silence, which to Zayn al-'Abidin seemed to imply Ibn al-Hanafiya's tacit approval .of Mukhtar's propaganda

The traditions recorded in this connection by Shi'i traditionists(۱) may or may not be

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۱- Kulayni, Kafi, pp.۳۵۲ f.

authentic in their details, but it does seem that he did make known to the people his own claims to the heritage of the House of the Prophet against those made on behalf of his uncle. This is deduced from the fact that some of those of the prominent Shi'is who had become followers of Ibn al-Hanafiya, such as Abu Khalid al-Kabuli(۱) Qasim b. 'Awf,(۲) and a few others, abandoned Ibn al-Hanafiya and went over to Zayn al-

'Abidin's side. The nucleus of his following, though, was not formed before ۷۳/۶۹۲, the year which marks the death of Ibn az-Zubayr and a complete collapse of the political aspirations of the peoples of the Hijaz and Iraq. The majority of the Shi'is, however, continued to recognize the Imamate of Ibn al-Hanafiya and later on his son Abu-Hashim 'Abd Allah.

Towards the end of his life Zayn al-'Abidin seems to have succeeded in gathering round himself a small group of his adherents, some of them quite prominent figures of the erstwhile followers of the Ahl al-Bayt. Among them, apart from Yahya b. Umm at-Tiwal(۳) and Muhammad b. Jubayr b. Mut'im(۴) was also Jabir b. 'Abd Allah al-Ansari,(۵) a respected Companion of the Prophet and a devoted supporter of 'Ali b. Abi Talib. On account of his prestige as one of the most devoted Companions of the Prophet who took part in the pledge of Al-'Aqaba and in the Bay'at ar-Ridwan, Jabir's recognition of Zayn al-'Abidin was of great significance for the latter. Another important

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۱- Kashshi, Ikhtiyar Ma'rifat ar-Rijal (Tehran, n.d.), p.۱۲۱

۲- ibid., p.۱۲۴

۳- ibid., p.۱۲۳

۴- ibid., p.۱۱۵

۵- ibid., p.۴; Ibn 'Imad, Shadharat adh-Dhahab (Cairo, ۱۳۵۰ A.H.), I, p.۸۴

figure was the Kufan Sa'id b. al-Jubayr,(۱) a mawla of Banu Asad and a warm-hearted and brave man who even refused to hide his partisanship and support for the House of the Prophet.

A well-known traditionist, Sa'd was Zayn al-'Abidin's main spokesman and gained for the son of Husayn many sympathizers among the ranks of his fellow traditionists, especially from the old companions of 'Ali b. Abi Talib. The group of Zayn al- 'Abidin's active supporters also included two young but energetic Kufans: Abu Hamza Thabit b. Dinar,(۲) an Arab from the tribe of Azd, and Furat b. Ahnaf al-'Abdi.(۳) Their

attachment to the family of Husayn remained strong, and both were later close companions of Zayn al-'Abidin ۵ son and successor Muhammad al-Baqir. That these people became the followers of Husaynid Imams and were in the close circles of Zayn al-'Abidin and then of Muhammad al-Baqir is further indicated by the fact that a great number of Shi'i traditions from the above-mentioned Imams are frequently transmitted on their authority.(۴) Obviously the Twelver Shi'i traditionists would not have accepted them in their isnads had they not been the followers of these Imams. Thus there seems to be no serious reason to doubt the reports that these people .formed a nucleus of the followers of Zayn al-'Abidin

Perhaps the most important role in enhancing Zayn al- 'Abidin's prestige was played by Farazdaq, a renowned poet of the time. He composed numerous verses to propagate the cause of Zayn al-'Abidin, the most famous

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Kashshi, Rijal, p. ۱۱۹ -۱

ibid., pp.۲۰۱-۳ -۲

ibid., p. ۱۲۴ -۳

e.g., Kulayni, Kafi; passim -۴

of which was his qasida (ode) in praise of the Imam, which celebrates the occasion when the Caliph Hisham b. 'Abd al-Malik was overshadowed by the respect the people demonstrated for the great-grandson of the Prophet. It was at the time of the Hajj when both of them were trying to reach the Black Stone in the crowded Ka'ba. The people gave way to Zayn al-'Abidin while the Caliph was struggling to reach the relic. This deeply offended Hisham, and in a sarcastic manner he inquired who was the person to whom the people gave preference. Farazdaq, present at the scene, upon hearing this remark, spontaneously composed the qasida and recited it, addressing Hisham. A few lines from this famous qasida, which is also considered as one of the :masterpieces of Farazdaq and of Arabic literature, are worth quoting

It is one whose footsteps are well known to every spot and it is he who is known to the Bayt [Ka'ba], in Mecca, the most frequented sanctuary.

It is he who is the son of the best of all men of God [reference to the Prophet], and it is he who is the most pious and devout, pure and unstained, chaste and righteous and a symbol [of Islam].

This is 'Ali [b. al-Husayn], whose father is the Prophet, and it was through the light of his [the Prophet's] guidance that the darkened road changed into the straight path.

This is the son of Fatima, if you are ignorant of him; and with his great-grandfather

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the Prophethood came to an end and Muhammad became the seal of the Prophets.

Whosoever recognizes his God knows also the primacy and superiority of this man ['Ali b. al-Husayn], because religion reached the nations through his house.(١)

The authenticity of this famous qasida of Farazdaq, and also the occasion at which it was composed and recited, has never been questioned by anyone. It must therefore be taken as a most reliable and useful contemporary document describing Zayn al-'Abidin, with particular emphasis on his noble birth as a descendant of the Prophet as distinct from Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya. One may note with interest that the poet, in praising Zayn al-'Abidin, describes him with emphasis on his being the grandson of

Fatima and the great-grandson of Muhammad, while he does not refer to his being .the grandson of 'Ali b. Abi Talib

Farazdaq, however, had to pay for his praise of the Imam, and was imprisoned by the order of Hisham. When Zayn al 'Abidin heard about the misfortune of the poet, he sent him a gift of ۱۲,۰۰۰ dirhams, but Farazdaq refused to accept it, saying that he had composed the poem purely from his religious zeal. Farazdaq remained in prison and then began to satirize Hisham. Fearing the poet's biting tongue, the prince released (him.(۲

All these reports of Zayn al-'Abidin's adherents suggest that the Husaynid line had never ceased to be a focus of devotion and special regard, though in this period by a small minority of the Shi'is, and that Zayn

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۱- Farazdaq, Diwan, I, p.۸۴۷ f.; Aghani; XXI, pp.۴۰۰ ff.; Ibn Khallikan, Wafayat, VI, pp. ۹۵f.; Bayhaqi, Kitab al-Mahasin wa'l- Masawi; ed. Schwally (Giessen, ۱۹۰۲), pp.۱۳۱ f.; Abu Nu'aym, Hilyat al-Awliya (Cairo, ۱۹۳۸), III, p.۱۳۹; Kashshi, Rijal, p. ۱۳۰ if.; Subki, Abo Nasr, Tabaqat ash-Shafi'iya, ed. Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Karim (Cairo, n.d.), I, pp.۱۵۳ if.; Ibn .Kathir, Bidaya, IX, pp. ۱۰۸ f

۲- .See the detailed account in the references cited in note ۲۵ above

al-'Abidin gathered around himself a committed following who looked upon him as the legitimist Imam of the House of the Prophet. Yet it cannot be denied that in the period between the death of Husayn in ۶۱/۶۸۰ and thedeath of Ibn az-Zubayr in ۷۳/۶۹۲, Zayn al-'Abidin was left without any active following. Indeed, the Tawwabun did consider, it seems, that Zayn al-'Abidin was their Imam, but they never declared it publicly; and the small number of them who survived the battle of 'Ayn al-Warda went over to Mukhtar and thus accepted Ibn al- Hanafiya as their Imam. This is confirmed even by

Muhammad al-Baqir in one of his traditions quoted by Kashshi, which must be accepted as genuine. Muhammad al-Baqir said: "After the death of Husayn all the people apostatised except three-Abu Khalid al-Kabuli, Yahya b. Umm at-Tiwal, and Jubayr b. Mut'im-and only later did others join them and their numbers increased."(1)

Moreover, that Zayn al-'Abidin was not of much significance as an Imam or leader of any visible group until the year ۷۳/۶۹۲ is further evident from the fact that among the 'Alids, including Ibn al-Hanafiya, whom Ibn az-Zubayr held in the prison of 'Arim, the name of Zayn al-'Abidin is nowhere mentioned.This means that he was of no potential danger to Ibn az-Zubayr and that until that time he remained quiet and did not make his claims to the Imamate publicly. Silence does not, however imply the complete absence of an idea, the expression of which often depends

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۱- Kashshi, Rijal, p.۱۲۳

on the prevailing circumstances and opportunities.

Apart from the small number of followers, mentioned above, who looked upon Zayn al-'Abidin with special regard as their Imam and the only religious authority of the time, he was also held in great respect and high esteem by the learned circles in Medina in general. This was the period when there was a growing sympathy and regard for the descendants of the Prophet among the people, though it was indeed altogether different from that of the Shi'is. This was also the period of growing interest in Medina in Prophetic traditions, especially those dealing with legal matters. This was the "epoch of the seven lawyers of Medina" whom we have mentioned in the second chapter of this book. In this setting of Medina we find that Zayn al-'Abidin was considered an eminent traditionist in the Medinese circle of scholars. The greatest Medinese lawyer of this time, Sa'id b. al-Musayyab, regarded the Imam with the highest esteem.(1)

The Shi'i sources assert that Sa'd was a follower of the Imam, which cannot be true. In fact, though Sa'd respected Zayn al-'Abidin and was also a close friend of his, he did not have common views in legal matters with him. However, at that time the schools of legal thought were still in their embryonic state, and therefore there might not have been many serious differences of opinion between Zayn al-'Abidin and Sa'id. Yet it is possible that the former, as well as his uncle, Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya,

p: ۳۳۷

۱- Ibn Sa'd, V, p. ۲۱۶; Kashshi, Rijal ۱۵۵ ff.

adhered only to the traditions related on the authority of 'Ali b. Abi Talib. Another great jurist and traditionist of the period, Az-Zuhri, was also a great friend and admirer of the Imam.

The honorific name Zayn a۱-'Abidin (the ornament of the pious), due to his excessive prayers, was given to him by Az-Zuhri;(۱) from the overwhelming reports recorded by both the Shi'I and the Sunni authorities,(۲) it seems, however, that Zayn al- 'Abidin was widely respected by the community in general for his extraordinary qualities, such as the long duration of his prayers, his piety, and his generosity. His piety must have been of a high degree, for he was not inclined to making a show of his virtues. When travelling with people who did not know him, he remained incognito so as not to take advantage of the fact that the Prophet was his ancestor.(۳)

Zayn al-Abidin died in the year ۹۴/۷۱۲-۷۱۳, and was buried in the cemetery of Al-Baqir. He lived thirty-four years after the death of Husayn, a period long enough to establish himself as the trustee of the heritage of his father, and to leave an imprint of his personality on his followers and associates. According to the unanimous Shi'i traditions, before his death Zayn al-'Abidin nominated Muhammad al-Baqir, his eldest son, as his wasi and successor to his heritage.(۴)

One may doubt the existence of any explicit will of Husayn for the nomination of Zayn

al-'Abidin as his successor, but we should accept the tradition

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Ibn Sa'd, V, p. ۲۱۶ -۱

For Sunni sources, see Ibn Sa'd, V, pp.۲۱۶-۲۲; Ibn Khallikan, III, pp. ۲۶۶ if.; Mubarrad, -۲ Kamil, I, p. ۲۶۰; II, p. ۱۳۸; III, pp.۱۲۰ f.; Ibn Kathir, Bidaya, IX, pp.۱۰۳-۱۵. For Shi'i sources, see Ya'qubi, II, p.۲۴۷; Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p. ۱۶۰; Kulayni, Kafi, I, Kitab al-Hujja and passim; Mufid, Irshad, II, pp.۱۳۸-۴۵; 'Amili, 'A'yan, IV, pp. ۳۰۸-۴۶۱

Mubarrad, Kamil, II, p. ۱۳۸ -۳

Kulayni, Kafi, I, pp.۳۵۴ f.; Majlisl, Bihar, XI, pp. ۱۰۰ ff.; Qadi Nu'man, Sharh, fol. ۳۲a -۴

that Zayn al-'Abidin, before his death, must have explicitly nominated his son Al-Baqir, at least in the circle of his adherents. The obvious factor in support of the credibility of this tradition is that during Zayn al-'Abidin's time the majority of the Shi'is abandoned the Husaynid line and went over to Ibn al-Hanafiya, and then accepted the Imamate of the latter's son, Abu Hashim; Zayn al-'Abidin thought this a usurpation of his rights and, not without much difficulty, succeeded in winning over a group of followers on the principle of legitimate succession through Fatima in the line of Husayn. It is then only natural that he would have entrusted his eldest son to continue the task on the same ground he had established.

Zayn al-'Abidin, by raising claims to the heritage of Husayn and by collecting around himself a number of followers, had only laid the foundation of the legitimist group of the Shi'a; it was the task of Muhammad al-Baqir to evolve the principles of legitimacy in the concept of succession. Some scholars(۱) have cast doubts on whether Muhammad al-Baqir really achieved any degree of success in his lifetime, or even whether he claimed the Imamate for himself. There is indeed a possibility that many traditions attributed to Al-Baqir in this connection might have been produced by some of his followers who survived him. Yet, there being no decisive criterion for either admission or rejection of these traditions, we must, as far as circumstantial evidence

allows, accept them in the

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Montgomery Watt, "Shi'ism under the Umayyads", pp. ۱۶۸ f.; Hodgson, op. cit., p. I -۱

form in which they are found in the earliest Shi'I collection of Hadith, Al-Usul al-Kafi Moreover, the testimony of the following Imams of the same line, and their own rejection of many a tradition forged by some of the fanatical followers of the House, .makes stronger the case in favour of the surviving traditions

Though Muhammad al-Baqir inherited his father's following, he had to face many more serious problems than did his father. Zayn al-'Abidin had only to counteract the propaganda of Mukhtar for the Imamate of Ibn al-Hanafiya, which he could easily do on the grounds that he was the descendant of the Prophet as well as of 'Ali. After the death of Zayn al- 'Abidin many descendants of Fatima too, either motivated by ambitions or discontented with the idea of the Imam being merely a spiritual guide, as .adopted by Zayn al-'Abidin, raised their own claims to the heritage of the Prophet

Thus the immediate problem facing Al-Baqir was not from outside, but from within the family circle. The movements of his two most potential rivals, 'Abd Allah al-Mahdi, who worked for his son Muhammad an-Nafs az-Zakiya, and Al-Baqir's half brother Zayd b. 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin, will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. Here it would suffice to point out in passing that Zayd b. Zayn al-'Abidin's energies appealed to many Shi'is and were a serious challenge to the Imamate of Al-Baqir. In these rivalries, however, Al-Baqir and his followers were markedly overshadowed by Zayd and led

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.the former to put increasing emphasis on legitimism within the Shi'i movement

Thus, against the claims of his half-brother, Al-Baqir resorted to the principle of

nomination by an explicit "text" (Nass)–a fundamental legitimist principle which will be discussed in detail in Chapter II. He claimed that Zayn al-'Abidin had appointed him to the succession in the presence of his brothers and had entruste him with a casket (containing secret religious scrolls and the weapons of the Prophet.(۱)

A number of traditions are recorded by the Shi'i traditionists(۲) in which Al-Baqir explains the nature and function of an Imam, who possesses certain special qualities which come down to him through the nass of the preceding Imam. In this way Al-Baqir introduced certain ideas which were to be fully elaborated by his son Ja'far as-Sadiq. The traditions of Al- Baqir, however, make it abundantly clear that he tried to establish his position as an Imam, declaring himself the representative of God on earth and the divinely inspired interpreter of His Word.

Now the most vital question with which we are concerned here is how far Al-Baqir succeeded in establishing the principle of legitimacy in the concept of the Imamate, and thereby whether he could really achieve any success of religious consequence in his lifetime. A close scrutiny of the biographical literature from both Sunni and Shi'i sources will help us to find an answer to this question. In this attempt, it is immensely useful to note that the names of the followers of

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۱- See references cited in note ۳۲ above

۲- See specifically Kulayni, Kafi; "Kitab al-Hujj a"

Al-Baqir, which have been recorded with full biographical details by the Imamate writers, were never disputed by the Sunny compilers of biographical dictionaries ((Kutub ar-Rijal).

Instead, whenever Sunni writers mention the names of the adherents of the legitimist Imams, they immediately remark that he was a rafidi, or a ghali; or a Shi'i. Besides biographical dictionaries, the heresiographical works such as Al-Baghdadi's Al-Farq

bayn al-Firaq, Ibn Hazm's Al-Fasl and Ash-Shahrastani's Al-Milal wa'l-Nihal also describe these names with often derogatory remarks. Finally, it should be noted that the Imamate writers themselves specifically remark that such-and-such a person changed his affiliation at such-and-such a time to Zayd or An-Nafs az-Zakiya, whatever the case may have been. Furthermore, the writers of the Zaydiya and Isma'iliya sects, which produced a considerable religious literature of their own, do not claim adherents of Al-Baqir as among their numbers. There was, indeed, a considerable shift from one 'Alid claimant to another by some, such as Bayan b. Sim'an and Al-Mughira b. Sa'id al-'Ijli, but they are vocally repudiated by the Imamate .writers

All these facts, however, support the view that the list of Al-Baqir's followers, which we are going to enumerate here as the legitimist faction, is not a mere fiction. No matter how much "the biographies of these men have been touched up by Shi'ite [Imamate] writers in the attempt to show that all along they [the Husaynid Imams] claimed to be Imams and acted as such,"(۱) these reports must have been based on .certain facts

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Montgomery Watt, op. cit., p. ۱۶۶ -۱

Indeed, Zayn al-'Abidin, Al- Baqir, and Ja'far were unimportant politically and as a matter of policy they avoided involvement in any political adventures, but this does not mean that they did not claim a strictly religious "function" as Imams for themselves. In fact the very policy of quiescence caused them to be overshadowed by other activist members of the family; at the same time, through this very policy, they in the long run survived as the Imams and emerged as the recognized leaders of .the future majority group of the Shi'a

It is no doubt true, however, that immediately after the death of Zayn al-'Abidin a struggle for the leadership began between Al-Baqir and his half-brother Zayd, and

that a great number from among the Shi'is preferred the latter because of his activist policy and his bold attitude. Yet, in the course of time Al-Bsqir succeeded in winning back some of those who had gone over to Zayd, as well as in attracting some new followers. The most important of them were Zuhra b. 'Ayan, his brother Humran, and Hamza b. Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah at-Tayyar. Zuhra in particular was a very important acquisition, for he became the most eminent theologian and traditionist of his time, with a wide circle of disciples in Kufa.(۱)

His brother Humran was formerly a close associate of Zayn al-'Abidin and later made himself known as an extremely devoted supporter of Al-Baqir, who promised him Paradise and declared that "Humran would be from our Shi'a in

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۱- Kashshi, Rijal, pp.۱۳۳ ff.

this world and the next."(۱) Hamza b. at-Tayyar, although for a time opposed to Al-Baqir, after hesitating between various claimants, finally chose to follow him.(۲) Apart from Zurara, other important adherents of Al-Baqir, who became the main authorities on Twelver fiqh when their Shi'i legal school was formulated later on, were Ma'ruf b. Kharrabfldh,(۳) Abu Basir al-Asadi,(۴) Burayd b. Mu'awiya,(۵)

Muhammad b. Muslim b. Riyah at-Ta'ifi,(۶) and Al-Fudayl b. Yasar.(۷) The prominent figure among them was Muhammad b. Muslim b. Riyah, a Kufan mawla of the Thaqif, a miller by trade, known also as Al-A'war (the one-eyed). Described as the "most trustworthy of all men", he was well known as a great jurist in Kufan circles and a contemporary fellow-lawyer of Ibn Abi Layla, Aba Hanifa, and Sharik al-Qadi. He seems to have been a counterpart of Zurara, for while the latter was a traditionist as well as a speculative theologian, and the originator of the Sh۱'i school of kalam, Muhammad b. Muslim combined knowledge of the science of Tradition with the work of a practical lawyer, and was renowned for quick and drastic solutions. He was also a well known ascetic.

Among these followers of Al-Baqir, Aba Basir Layth al- Bakhtari al-Muradi also attained fame and reputation as a great Shi'i faqih and traditionist. Aba Basir, a mawla of Banu Asad, became the favourite companion of Al-Baqir and later of Ja'far al-Sadiq. Ja'far is reported to have said that Aba Basir, Burayd, Zurara, and Muhammad b. Muslim were the "tent pegs

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۱- ibid., pp. ۱۶۱, ۱۷۶ ff

۲- ibid., pp.۲۷۶, ۳۴۷ ff.

۳- ibid., pp.۲۱۱, ۲۳۸. See also Ha'iri Muntaha al-Maqal (Tehran, ۱۳۰۲ AH), pp.۳۰۴-۵

۴- Kashshi, Rijal, pp. ۱۶۹, ۲۳۸

۵- ibid., p.۲۳۸

۶- Kashshi, Rijal, pp. i۶i, ۲۳۸; Ha'iri, Muntaha, p.۲۴۳

۷- Kashshi, Rijal, pp.۲۱۳ f.; Ha'iri, Muntaha, p.۲۴۳; Najashi, Rijal, p.۲۱۰

of the world", and that without them the Prophetic traditions would have been lost.(۱) They were the fastest runners and the closest associates of the Imams. Another striking figure was Aba Hamza ath-Thumali, who occupieda high place among Al-Baqir's associates, and to him may be traced many traditions of an extremist tendency, especially those relating to miracles.(۲)

Al-Kumayt b. Zayd al-Asadi,(۳) a renowned poet of his time, was another great and very important supporter of Al-Baqir. He served the cause of the Imam more than any other follower through his poetic genius. His devotion, which found expression in his talented poetry, took the name and fame of Al-Baqir far and wide. But his collection of poetry, devoted to the praise of the Ahl al-Bayt, the "al-Hashimiyat", caused him some serious trouble. The anti-'Alid viceroy of Iraq, Yusuf b. 'Umar, brought this work to the attention of the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik.(۴) Kumayt, however, managed to extricate himself from danger, and in order to please the Caliph he even

wrote some poems in praise of the Umayyads.(۵) Nevertheless, the poet remained a great favourite of the legitimist line of the Husaynid Imams, and Ja'far as-Sadiq said (of him: "Kumayl has not ceased to be aided by the Holy Spirit."(۶

Though the city of Basra was generally anti-Shi'i, Al-Baqir succeeded in gaining several followers there too, such as Muhammad b. Marwan al-Basri(۷) and Malik .b.A'yan.(۸) In Mecca also, Al-Baqir earned quite a few staunch followers

However, the popularity of the movement of Zayd b. Zayn Al-Abidin

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Kashshi, Rijal, p.۱۷۰; Ha'iri; Muntaha, pp. ۲۴-۵۰ -۱

Kashshl, Rijal, pp.۲۰۱ ff; Ha'iri; Muntaha, p.۷۳ -۲

See Aghani; XVI, pp.۳۳۰ ff; Jahiz, Bayan, I, p.۴۶ -۳

Aghani; XVI, p.۳۳۳ -۴

.Kashshi, Rijal, pp. ۲۰۶ f.; Aghani; loc. cit -۵

.Kashshi; Rijal, p. ۲۰۶ f -۶

Kashshi, Rijal, p.۲۱۴; Ha'iri, Muntaha, p.۲۹۳ -۷

.Kashshi, loc. cit.; Ha'iri, loc. cit -۸

overshadowed Al-Baqir's efforts to establish the legitimist Imamate, yet Al-Baqir restricted himself to attacking only the friends and followers of Zayd. Nevertheless, when an opportunity presented itself, he did not hesitate to contest Zayd's rights quite sharply. Thus when Sa'id b. al-Mansur, one of the leaders of the Zaydiya circle, :asked him

What is your opinion about nabidh, for I have seen Zayd drinking it?" Al-Baqir replied:" "I do not believe that Zayd would drink it, but even if he did, he is neither a Prophet nor a Trustee of a Prophet, only an ordinary person from the Family of Muhammad, and

he is sometimes right and sometimes may commit an error."(۱) This was both an open denial of Zayd's rights to the Imamate, and an indirect assertion of his own position as the Prophetic Wasi Muhammad al-Baqir was the son of Fatima, the daughter of Al-Hasan,(۲) and so, being the descendant of the Prophet and of 'Ali on both sides, he had a great advantage over Zayd, whose mother was a slave-woman from Sind,(۳) but the former never showed any inclination to organize an active movement and .maintained the pacific policy of his father

On the other hand, Zayd, a close associate of Wasil b. 'Ata', the Mu'tazilite, was strongly impressed by the latter's ideas and laid emphasis on the principle of "ordering good and prohibiting evil", if necessary, by force. Accordingly, he believed that if an Imam wanted to be recognized, he had to claim his right, sword in

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۱- Kashshi, Rijal, p.۲۳۲

۲- Ibn Sa'd, V, pp.۲۱۱, ۳۲۰, ۳۲۵ f.

۳- Abu'l-Faraj, Maqatil, p.۱۲۷; Ibn Sa'd, V, pp.۲۱۱, ۳۲۵ f.

hand.(۱) Al-Baqir and Zayd quarrelled over this point, for when the latter asserted that an Imam must rise against the oppressors, the former remarked: "So you deny that your own father was an Imam, for he never contested the issue."(۲)

When Abu Bakr b. Muhammad al-Hadrami and his brother 'Alqama, two Kufan Shi'is, asked Zayd whether 'Ali was an Imam before he resorted to the sword, he refused to answer the question, which made them break their allegiance with Zayd and go over to Al-Baqir.(۳)

A crucial question was that of the rights of Abu-Bakr and 'Umar. Zayd, agreeing with the Mu'tazilites, held that the first two caliphs had been legally elected Imams, though

'Ali was the preferable candidate, and this greatly impressed the traditionist circles. At the same time he rejected the Mu'tazilite doctrine of the "intermediate state", but did not object to the opinion of Wasil, that in the conflict between "'Ali and his adversaries" one of the opposing sides was certainly wrong though Wasil was not sure which,(۴) whereas Zayd regarded the virtues of 'Ali as of such a high order that the idea of his not being in the right was inadmissible.

However, Zayd's special emphasis on accepting the caliphates of Abu Bakr and 'Umar and his popularity on this ground among moderate circles show, on the one hand, that the question of the caliphates of the first two caliphs had already been under serious discussion in some Shi'i circles at that time, and on the other hand, that

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۱- Shahrastani, Milal, I, pp. ۱۵۴ f.

۲- ibid.

۳- Kashshi, Rijal, pp.۴۱۶ f.

۴- Shahrastani, Milal, I, p.۴۹

Zayd's success by adopting this stand created an embarrassing and complicated situation for Al-Baqir. Zayn al-'Abidin himself never spoke against the first two caliphs, but during Al-Baqir's lifetime some of the extremists who sided themselves with him started asking this question among the legitimist section of the Shi'a. Al-Baqir was thus asked time and again what he thought of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, but he did not publicly discredit them and rather confirmed that they were caliphs.(۱)

Yet certain Shi'is of Kufa asserted that he disavowed the first two caliphs and only concealed his real opinion by resorting to the principle of dissimulation.(۲) This propaganda on the part of some of the Kufan followers of Al-Baqir no doubt earned him the sympathy of many extremist and semi-extremist circles, but on the other hand it discouraged those who wanted an active and more practical movement to bring the Ahl al-Bayt to power, and were already disappointed with Al-Baqir's

quiescent policy. These moderates therefore preferred to range themselves on the side of Zayd,(۳) who in order to secure certain advantages became more emphatic in his acceptance of the first two caliphs, at the same time rejecting the principle of Taqiya. Al-Baqir was infuriated by the attitude of these Ku fan Shi'is and said, "Even if the Butrites formed one battle-line from east to west, God would not grant glory to the world through them."(۴)

Among these Kufan Shi'is was Al-Hakam b. 'Utayba al-Kindi, one of the most eminent lawyers of his city.(۵) He

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۱ - Ibn Kathir, Bidaya, IX, p.۳۱۱; Dhahabi, Ta'rikh, IV, p.۳۰۰; Ibn al-Jawzi, Sifat as-Safwa, II, p. ۶۱; Abu Nu'aym, Hilya, III, p. ۱۸۵

۲- Traditions referring to the poet Kumayt quote Al-Baqir as very violently disavowing Abu Bakr and 'Umar; see Kashshl, Rijal, pp.۲۰۵ f. On the other hand Kumayt did not express himself openly against the first two caliphs; see his verse in Hashimyat, p. ۱۵۵

۳- Nawbakhti, Firaq, pp.۵۲ ff.; Kashshl, Rijal, p.۲۲۹

۴- Kashshi, Rijal, p.۲۳۲. The Butrlya were those who drew no distinction between the claimants from the house of 'Ali and supported any 'Alid claimant who revolted, sword in hand.

۵- Dhahabi; Ta'rikh, IV, p. ۲۴۲; Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib, II, pp. ۴۳۴ ff

put 'Ali b. Abi Talib above Abu Bakr, but nevertheless remained mild in his Shi'i partisanship, which made him highly popular among the followers of Zayd. As the judge of Kufa, he exercised a strong influence among his fellow-citizens, thus greatly helping the cause of Zayd.(۱) Naturally Al-Baqir, who considered that he possessed better rights to the Imamate than his younger half-brother, and also objected to the generally compromising attitude of Zayd and his partisans, spoke of them in a bitter way, giving expression to his displeasure thus: "Hakam b. 'Utayba and other associates of Zayd led astray many people. They say, 'We believe in God and the Last

Day,' but they are not believers."(۲) The successor of Al-Baqir, Ja'far as-Sadiq, upheld the same view and accused Hakam of blaspheming against Al-Baqir,(۳) and even called the Zaydites an-Nussab (dissenters) who hated 'Ali.(۴)

The question of the first two caliphs at this stage draws our attention to another problem: that of religious practices. Al-Baqir adhered to the traditions derived from 'Ali and his supporters. There were, however, certain disagreements even among the Ahl al-Bayt, for Zayd was inclined to accept the practice of the Ashab al-Hadith of Kufa, mainly based on the rulings of 'Umar. Thus it was Al-Baqir who established the beginnings of the madhhab (legal school) of the Ahl al-Bayt Kashshi records for us a very important tradition which says:

"Before the Imamate of Muhammad al-Baqir the Shi'is did not know what was lawful and what was unlawful, except what

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۱- Ibn 'Imad, Shadharat, I, p.۱۵۱

۲- Kashshi, Rijal, p.۲۰۹

۳- Kashshi, Rijal, p.۲۰۹; Ha'iri, Muntaha p.۲۶۳

۴- Kashshi, Rijal, pp.۲۰۹, ۲۲۹

they learned from the [other] people; until Abu Ja'far [Al-Baqir] became the Imam, and he taught them and explained to them the knowledge [of law], and they began to teach other people from whom they were previously learning."(۱)

This tradition clearly indicates that until the time of Al-Baqir there were hardly any differences in legal practices among the Shi'is and Ashab al-Hadith of Medina, Kufa, and elsewhere. Even later the differences in the sphere of legal matters (furu') were

in reality few,(۲) such as while Al-Baqir absolutely forbade all intoxicants, including nabidh (fermented drinks)(۳) the Kufan jurists allowed nabidh. Another problem was that of mut'a (temporary marriage), over which the Shi'i and Kufan jurists differed, the former allowing it on the authority of 'Ali, the latter forbidding it, referring to the decision of 'Umar.(۴) The argument was that if 'Umar could revoke a permission granted by the Prophet, then 'Ali could revoke a ruling of 'Umar.

However, the above-mentioned accounts seem to make it highly probable that Muhammad al-Baqir did claim the Imamate as the inheritance of his father, and that the small nucleus established by Zayn al-'Abidin began to develop under him into a legitimist faction within the Shi'i movement. If we reject this then we will have to reject many established historical facts, foremost among them being the rivalry and even the quarrel, overwhelmingly reported by the sources, between him and Zayd. Nevertheless, the dates of the deaths of the chief associates of Al-Baqir indicate that these developments in his

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۱- Kashshi, Rijal, p. ۲۸۹

۲- Schacht, Origins, pp. ۲۶۲ ff

۳- Kulayni, Furu' al-Kafi, II, p.۱۹۳. Also see Dhahabl, Tadhkirat al-Huffaz, I, p. ۱۶۰; Qadi Nu'man, Sharh Al-Akhbar, fol. ۳۶a

۴- Schacht, Origins, pp. ۲۶۶ ff; Malik b. Anas, Muwatta, III, p.۲۳; Murtada b. Dai', Tadhkirat al-'Awamm, pp. ۲۷۰-۲۷۱

favour took place towards the end of his life, for most of the renowned traditionists and jurists of his circle survived him by at least a decade.

At the time of Al-Baqir's death, the legitimist faction, though still limited in number, was to be found in all the main centres of the Hijaz and Iraq. It possessed the

elements necessary for its future growth into a strong and popular discipline. It possessed a theoretical foundation, still only partly formulated and uncertain, and although it was not completely separated from the current ideas permeating the Madhhab Ashab al-Hadith, it was nevertheless sufficiently individualized to be regarded as a doctrine in its own right. It had in Zurara and his disciples its own school of speculative theology and an embryo for a school of jurisprudence. Finally, in .Kumayt it was able to produce its own literature and gain widespread public exposure

Much has been recorded about Muhammad al-Baqir's person and extraordinary qualities, many of which he inherited from his father. He was extremely generous. devoted to acts of piety, and peaceful by nature, never thinking to organize a revolt to assert his rights.(۱) Instead he strove to impress people by his extensive knowledge in matters of religion, and in fact he came to be considered as one of the most erudite men of his time. Because of this -learning, according to Ya'qubi, he was nicknamed Al-Baqir, "the one who splits knowledge open": that is, he scrutinized it and examined the depths of it.(۲) But

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۱- Ibn Sa'd, V, p.۳۲۱; Kulayni, Kafi, pp.۲۹۹ ff; Qadi Nu'man, Sharh al-Akhbar, fol. ۳۲a ff.; 'Amill, A'yan, IV, pp. ۲۶۲ ff; Ibn Khallikan, IV, p. ۱۷۶; Majlisl, Bihar, XI, pp. ۱۰۰ ff

۲- Ya'qubi, II, p.۳۲۰; Bayhacl, Kitab al-Mahasin wa'l Masawi, III, pp. ۲۹۸ ff; Qadi Nu'man, Sharh al-Akhbar, fol. ۳۳a

according to Ibn Khallikan, he received the appellation Al-Baqir, "the ample", because he collected an ample fund (tabaqqar) ofknowledge.(۱)

Many jurists, attracted by the fame of his learning, used to visit him to discuss legal problems. Among them were Muhammad b. Minkadir, Abu Hanifa an-Nu'man, Qatida b. Di'ama, 'Abd Allah b. Mu'ammar al-Laythi, and the Kharijite Nafi' b. Azraq.(۲)

It is not certain when Al-Baqir died. The earliest date is given as ۱۱۳/۷۳۱-۷۳۲,(۳) the latest as ۱۲۶/۷۴۳-۷۴۴.(۴) The most acceptable however, seems to be ۱۱۷/۷۳۵, as given by Ya'qubi.(۵) There can be no doubt that he was no longer alive when Zayd revolted in Kufa, but he could not have been dead for many years then, as Ja'far as-Sadiq's position was still not well established.

Shahrastani tells us that some of Al-Baqir's followers refused to believe that he had died and expected his raja (return).(۶) These people must have been former Kaysanites who abandoned Abu Hashim and attached themselves to Al- Baqir's following. If, however, this report has any truth in it, it is a further proof that Al-Baqir in his lifetime was recognized by a group of people as their Imam. Nawbakhti classifies his followers as Al-Baqiriya,(۷) which was replaced after his death by Al-Ja'fariya, derived from his son and successor.(۸) These titles given by heresiographers, however, should not be taken literally, as they are used to mention the followers of certain persons, and not a sect.

Muhammad al-Baqir, by the time he died, had lived as an Imam for about nineteen years.

۱- Ibn Khallikan, IV, p.۱۷۶

۲- Qadi Nu'man, loc. cit.; 'Amili, A'yan, pp.۴۹۰ ff; Majlisi, Bihar, XI, pp.۱۰۰ f.; Kulayni, Kafi, pp.۲۹۹ ff; Bhahlanji, Nur al-Ibsar, pp. ۱۶۰ ff

۳- See Ibn Sa'd, V, p.۳۲۴; Ibn Khallikan, IV, pp.۱۷۴; Abu'l-Mahasin, Nujum, I, pp.۲۷۳ f. The last source here says he died in AH ۱۱۴.

۴- Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p.۲۱۹

۵- Ya'qubi, II, p.۳۲۰. Also see Dhahabi, Ta'rikh, IV, p.۳۰۰

Shahrastani, Milal, I, p. ۱۶۶ -۶

Firaq, p.۲۵ -۷

Al-Ja'fariya should not be confused with the name Madhhab al-Ja'fari, given very -۸ .often to the present Twelver Shi'a

He left his heritage to his son and successor Ja'far as-Sadiq, to whom we now turn .our attention

Chapter ۱۰: The Imamate of Ja'far as-Sadiq

The sixth Imam, Abu 'Abd Allah Ja'far, the eldest son of Muhammad al-Baqir, was born in Medina either in ۸۰/۶۹۰ ۷۰۰ or ۸۳/۷۰۳-۷۰۴.(۱) On his father's side Ja'far was of course a Husaynid descendant of the Prophet, and like his father he had a doubly strong relationship to 'Ali, since Muhammad al-Baqir was an 'Alid on both his father's (and his mother's sides.(۲

On his mother's side Ja'far was the great-great-grandson of Abu Bakr,(۳) and thus he was the first among the Ahl al-Bayt who combined in his person descent from Abu Bakr as well as from 'Ali. His mother Umm Farwa was the daughter of Al-Qasim b. Muhammad b. Abi Bakr.(۴) Qasim married the daughter of his uncle 'Abd ar-Rahman b. Abi Bakr, and thus Umm Farwa was the great-granddaughter of Abu Bakr on both the .father's and the mother's sides

For the first fourteen years of his life Ja'far was brought up under the guardianship of his grandfather Zayn al-'Abidin. He observed the latter's acts of charity, his love for long series of prostrations and prayers, and his withdrawal from politics. At the same

time, Ja'far noticed his grandfather's claims to the Imamate and his efforts, though meagre and limited, to collect around himself some devoted followers who resisted the popular appeal of the Imamate of Muhammad b. al- Hanafiya and then the latter's son, Abu Hashim. Ja'far also saw the

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۱- For the former date, see Ya'qubi, Ta'rikh, II, p. ۳۸۱; Ibn Khallikan, I. p.۳۲۷; Ibn al- Jawzi; Safwa, II, p. ۹۳; 'Amili, A'yan, IV, p. ۵۴; Muhammad b. Talha, Matalib al-Su'ul, p. ۸۹. For the latter, see Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p. ۲۱۹; Sa'd al-Ash'ari, Maqalat, p. ۷۹; Kulayni, Kufi; p. ۱۹۳; Majlisi, Tadhkirat al-A'imma p. ۱۳۹. It is difficult to choose between these two dates, but the former is probably correct, since Ibn Khallikan and others record his birth in the 'Amm al-Juhaf the year of the flood in Mecca, which according to Tabari, II, p. ۱۰۴۰, occurred in ۸۰/۶۹۹-۷۰۰.

۲- Ibn Sa'd, V, p. ۳۲۰; Ya'qubi, II, p. ۳۲۰; Qadi Nu'man, Sharh al-Akhbar, MS. fol. ۳۲a.

۳- Ibn Khallikan, I, p. ۳۲۷; Qadi Nu'man, loc. cit.

۴- Tabari, III, p. ۲۵۰۹; Ya'qubi, II, p. ۳۸۱; Sa'd al-Ash'ari, Maqalat, p. ۷۹; Ibn Khallikan, loc. cit.; Kulayni, Kufi, p. ۱۹۴; 'Amili; A'yan, IV, p. ۴۵۲

respect with which Zayn al-'Abidin was held by the famous lawyers and scholars of Medina and elsewhere.(۱) In his mother's house young Ja'far saw his maternal grandfather, Qasim b. Muhammad b. Abi Bakr, considered by the people of Medina as one of the most erudite and esteemed traditionists of his time.(۲)

Outside the family the childhood of Ja'far coincided with a rapidly growing interest in Medina in the acquiring of knowledge of Prophetic traditions and of seeking explanations of the Qur'anic verses. His boyhood also witnessed the culmination of Umayyad power, the final establishment of their administrative imperium, a period of peace and plenty, but hardly of religious fervour, as will be elaborated below. It seems probable that an environmental background of this kind in the life of a boy of fourteen may have influenced his thinking and personality, giving his future work a certain

.direction

With the death of Zayn al-'Abidin, Ja'far entered his early manhood and spent about twenty-three years under his father Muhammad al-Baqir. In all these years not only did Ja'far see his father's efforts to establish himself as the Imam of the House of the Prophet, but as the eldest son he participated in these activities. When Al-Baqir died, Ja'far was thirty-seven or thirty-four years old and was destined to live for a period of at least twenty-eight years as the head of the Shi'a following the elder line of the Husaynid Imams-a period longer than any other Imam of the House attained.(۳)

Ja'far's fame for religious learning

۱- See Ibn Sa'd, V, p. ۲۱۶; Ibn 'Imad, Shadharat, I, p. ۱۰۴; Ya'qubi, III, p. ۴۶; Kashshi, Rijal, pp. ۷-۷۹; Abu Nu'aym, Hilya, III, p. ۱۳۵

۲- Ibn Sa'd, V, pp. ۱۸۹ ff; Tabari, II, p. ۱۱۸۳; Ibn Imad, Shadharat, I, p. ۶۲

۳- See Kulayni, Kafi; p. ۱۹۳. His Imamate would have been of twenty-eight years' duration based on a birth date of ۸۳/۷۰۳-۷۰۴; if ۸۰/۶۹۹-۷۰۰ is accepted, his period in the Imamate would be thirty- one years.

was great, greater than that of his father or of any other Twelver Imam except for 'Ali b. Abi Talib himself. Perhaps the earliest historical reference presenting Ja'far as one of the most respected and highly esteemed personalities of his epoch, and as having profound knowledge and learning, is Ya'qubi's statement that it was customary for scholars who related anything from him to say: “The Learned One informed us.”(۱) Even the famous jurist of Medina, the Imam Malik b. Anas, is reported to have said, when quoting Ja'far's traditions: “The Thiqa (truthful) Ja'far b. Muhammad himself told me that ...”(۲) Similar compliments for Ja'far are attributed to the Imam Abu Hanifa,(۳) who is also reported to have been his pupil Shahrastani said of Ja'far:

His knowledge was great in religion and culture, he was fully informed in philosophy,“ he attained great piety in the world, and he abstained entirely from lusts. He lived in Medina long enough to greatly profit the sect that followed him, and to give his friends the advantage of the hidden sciences. On his father's side he was connected with the tree of prophecy, and on his mother's side with Abu Bakr.”(۴)

The Imamate of Ja'far as-Sadiq saw the most crucial period of Islamic history, both in political and in doctrinal spheres. It coincided with many epoch-making events, violent movements, the natural results of various undercurrent activities and revolutionary attempts, and above all the compromising attitude between the Ahl al-Hadith and the Muri'ites in their efforts to standardize

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۱- Ya'qubi, II, p. ۳۸۱

۲- Qadi Nu'man, Sharh al-Akhbar, MS. Fo۱. ۴۲a

۳- ibid., fo۱. ۳۹a

۴- Shahrastani, Milal, I, p. ۱۶۶

a corpus of doctrine for the synthesis of the Muslim community, or Jama'a. The very existence of this many-sided and complex situation facilitated the rise of Ja'far's Imamate to a prominence not previously attained by the Imamates of his father and grandfather. Thus the fundamental point to be investigated is how the Imamate of Ja'far attained so great a prominence, as attested to by the testimony of Shi'i as well as Sunni sources, after having been reduced to an insignificant following by the abandonment of the line of the quiescent Imams by the majority of the Shi'is, who had been persuaded to join the extremist and revolutionary factions.

The answer to this question, however, cannot be found without examining a series of events and their ultimate results-the results which appeared in the success of the

'Abbasid house and the subsequent repudiation and frustration of the Shi'i cause. As Moscati has observed, after their success the 'Abbasids joined hands with the rest of the Muslims and pushed the Shi'is, on whose strength they had risen to power, into the role of an opposition.(۱) It is not possible, nor would it be desirable, to go into the details of all those events of far-reaching consequences which took place before and during the Imamate of Ja'far and, as we have tentatively assumed above, made it .crucial. Nevertheless, a broad outline and brief survey is necessary

When the Umayyad's autocratic rule and their libertine way of life frustrated the expectations of Muslims, especially after the

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S. Moscati, "Per Una Storia De la'Antica Si'a," RSO, ۱۹۵۵, p. ۲۵۱ -۱

massacre at Karbala, many Muslims conceived the idea of Al-Mahdi; a leader they considered as directly guided by God. Though the use of the term Mahdi became the chief characteristic of the Shi'is, it had a great appeal among non Shi'is as well. The first to be proclaimed as the Mahdi was 'Ali's third son Muhammad,(۱) born of a .Hanafite woman

The mass acre of Husayn,(۲) the only surviving grandson of the Prophet, at Karbala, the destruction of the Ka'ba, the siege of Medina and the misfortunes inflicted on the pro 'Alid Kufans were sufficient grounds for a Mahdi uprising, though vengeance for "the blood of the Son of the Prophet" was the main cry.(۳) The reluctance of Husayn's surviving son Zayn al-'Abidin to involve himself in political adventures caused the restless Kufan sympathizers of the House to seek the moral support of any other member of 'Alid descent. Thus, in the beginning it was perhaps not the personality of Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya which impressed the Kufans, but rather the basic need for a figurehead in whose name the movement could be launched. In fact, even

Muhammad b. al- Hanafiya had always been reluctant to claim the role of the Mahdi (for himself.(۴)

Mukhtar understood the situation only too well and made full use of it. He gathered :the Kufan Shi'is in his house and declared

Al-Mahdi Muhammad b. 'Ali, the son of the Wasi; sent me to you as his trusted man,“ minister, and chosen supporter, and as his commander. He ordered

p: ۳۵۷

۱- B. Lewis, The Origins of Isma'ilism, p.۲۵

۲- Husayn was also called “al-Mahdi; son of al-Mahdi', but this as yet had no messianic implications. See Tabari, II, p. ۴۶

۳- Baladhuri, V, p. ۲۱۸; also see Tabari, II, pp. ۶۰۶ f., ۶۳۳

۴- See Ibn Sa'd, V, p. ۹۴

me to fight against the blasphemers and claim vengeance for the blood of the people (of his House, the excellent ones.”(۱)

It is interesting to note that the emphasis is placed not on Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya, but on the “Mahdi” and on the “son of the Wasi” Ibn al-Hanafiya in fact may have agreed to Mukhtar's suggestions, when the latter said, “Your silence is your agreement,” but nevertheless maintained an uncommitted attitude. In any case, Mukhtar might have so understood Ibn al-Hanafiya's behaviour, as he interpreted it .before the people of Kufa

Mukhtar's propaganda for Ibn al-Hanafiya's Mahdism gained the unqualified support

of the great majority of the Shi'is, comprising both the Arabs and a large number of Persian mawali living in Kufa, who, as we have already seen, had by this time outnumbered the former. These mawali, who formed the backbone of Mukhtar's movement, called themselves shi'at al-Mahdi (the party of Al-Mahdi), Shi'at Al-Muhammad (the party of the Family of Muhammad), or the shi'at al-Haqq (the party of Truth).(۲) Consequently, a sect in its own right, considerably well organized, active, and equipped with ideas of different extractions, emerged with the name of the Kaysaniya, named after either the kunya of Mukhtar himself or the highly controversial figure of Abu 'Amra Kaysan, the mawla of Mukhtar.(۳)

Though Mukhtar's rule was soon ended by his being killed with the majority of his followers, Kaysanism, introduced by his followers to various provinces, became too widespread to be eradicated. These sectarians, some of whom lived as

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۱- Baladhuri, loc. cit.

۲- Tabari, II, pp. ۶۷۲-۷۱۰; Baladhuri, V, p. ۲۵۳. For the other titles which they were given, see Tabari, II, p. ۶۹۱; Baladhuri; loc. cit.

۳- For the name Kaysaniya there are a number of suggestions, and the person of Aba 'Amra Kaysan has also been a great historical problem. For various suggestions and possibilities see Shahrastani, Milal, I, p. ۱۴۷; Baghdadi, Farq, p. ۲۶; Baladhuri, V, p.۲۲۹; B. Lewis, The Origins of Isma'ilism, p.۲۷

far away as Khurasan, continued to recognize Ibn al-Hanafiya as their Imam-Mahdi and to revere him to an extravagant degree. After his death in ۸۱/۷۰۰-۷۰۱,(۱) the extremists of the sect believed in his concealment (ghayba) and return (raj'a), while the majority accepted the eldest of his sons, Abu Hashim 'Abd Allah, as the new Imam directly appointed by him.(۲) The former group was represented by three notable poets, Abu'l-Tufayl 'Amir b. Wa'ila, Kuthayyir, and Sayyid al-Himyari ; (۳) the last of these later became a follower of Ja'far as-Sadiq.

Kashshi records an interesting story about two men from the entourage of Ja'far as-Sadiq, As-Sarraj and Hammad b. 'Isa, who were known to believe that Muhammad b. al- Hanafiya was still alive. Ja'far reproached them and pointed out that Ibn al-Hanafiya was seen being buried, and his property had been divided and his widow had re-married.(۴) Nevertheless, the doctrine of "return" from that time became one .of the chief characteristics of most branches of the Shi'is

The messianic expectations of the Kaysanites, however, influenced a great number of the Muslims, Shi'is as well as non-Shi'is. Mahdism in fact became a common vehicle for the expression of the general feelings of the epoch, and was used as an effective .instrument for political adventures

There was a widespread dissatisfaction of both a political and a social nature which had many causes The Arabs of Iraq were opposed to the hegemony of the Syrians. The non-Arab mawali resented the high-handed treatment meted out to them by the Arab

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۱- Ibn Sa'd, V, p.۱۱۵

۲- Ibn Khaldun, 'Ibar, III, p.۱۷۲. Thus Aba Hashim became recognized as the official head of this branch of the Shi'a; see De Goeje, "Al-Baladhuri Ansab", ZDMG, ۱۸۸۴, p.۳۹۴

۳- See the verse of Kuthayyir in Aghani; IX, p.۱۴, and the eulogy of Ibn al-Hanafiya by Al-Sayyid al-Himyari in Aghani; VII, p.۲۲۷

۴- Kashshi, Rijal, p.۳۱۴

ruling class, and the increasing number of Arabs entitled to the allowances must have added to the burdens imposed on the subject and conquered peoples. Because of the

omnipresence of religion in every sphere of life, the social ferment and opposition against the existing regime were expressed in religious terms. General discontent, however, was not directed against the legal and religious foundations of the Islamic state as such.(۱) The laws contained in the Qur'an and the Sunna were the Word of God and the example of the Prophet under divine inspiration, and so they could not be wrong. But the rulers who applied these ۱-aws, and whose duty it was to maintain and administer justice, were responsible for distorting or neglecting the commands of God and the custom of the Prophet. Thus the hope for liberation and a change in the political and social system meant not the abolition of the existing legal basis and the introduction of another law, but the faithful application of the divine rules.(۲)

Thus anti-Umayyad propaganda found expression mainly, and perhaps spontaneously, in religious terms. "The main concern of the Umayyads," as Schacht remarks, "was not with religion and religious law, but with political administration, and here they represented the organizing, centralising, and increasingly bureaucratic tendency of an orderly administration. They were interested in questions of religious policy and theology insofar as these had a bearing on loyalty to themselves."(۳) To this another observation may be added. The close proximity in time of Umayyad rule with

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۱- W.Ivanow, "Early Shi'ite Movements", JBBRAS, ۱۹۳۹, p.۳

۲- ibid.

۳- Schacht, An Introduction to Islamic Law, p.۲۳

that of Muhammad and the Rashidun caliphs and the vast difference between their respective ways of life made the Muslims watch with shock and concern the personal lives, conduct, and behaviour of the Umayyads, addicted to wine-bibbing and singing-girls. Thus, with emphasis placed on their impiety and ungodliness, the Umayyads were regarded as usurpers, who deprived the family of the Prophet of their rights and inflicted untold wrongs upon them.(۱) The sack of Medina and the burning of the Ka'ba

(were also a black spot on the record of the dynasty.(۲

These observations by the Muslims led them to decry the Umayyads and depict their rule as an epoch of tyranny (zulm), at the same time placing before the eyes of the masses a hope for liberation. The victory of justice being understood as one of faith over impiety, it could be achieved only by divine sanction and under a God-inspired leader. Thus rather naturally the majority believed that this leader, Al-Mahdi, should be a man descended from the Prophet, or at least a member of his family, the Ahl al-Bayt. At the same time it should be particularly noted that the Messianic idea did not imply a mere passive waiting for salvation or spiritual guidance, a policy distinctly adopted by the legitimist line of the Imams: Ja'far and his predecessors. The concept of Yihad, which required every believer to expose his life and property in the cause of .religion, did not allow for such a passive attitude

The first 'Alid of

Mubarrad, Kamil, I, p.۷۱۰ -۱

Jahiz. Rasa'il, "Kitab Fadl Bani Hashim", p.۹۹; "Risala fi Bani Umayya", p.۶۶. Also see -۲ .the commentary on the Qur'anic verse XVII, ۵۰ in the tafsir works

the Husaynid line who rose against the tyranny of the Umayyads was Zayd, the second son of Zayn al-'Abidin. After the death of Zayn al-'Abidin, when his eldest son Al-Baqir, who became the legitimate Imam of the house, strictly followed his father's quiescent policy and restricted himself to the claims of religious leadership, Zayd proclaimed the principle of establishing good and prohibiting evil by force if necessary. Zayd preached that if an Imam wanted to be recognized, he should claim his rights sword in hand. It was, in fact, an expression of the deeply felt feelings not only of the Shi'is of Kufa, but also of the majority of Medinese, which Zayd understood only too

.well

Thus many followers of Zayn al-'Abidin left Al-Baqir and went over to Zayd. They were joined by a considerable number of those of the Shi'is who had previously upheld the Imamate of Ibn al-Hanafiya and Abu Hashim, but the moderate views of Zayd's followers could not be reconciled with the extremist doctrines of the Kaysanites. At the same time, Zayd, by adhering to Wasil b. 'Ata' and his doctrines, gained the whole-hearted support of the Mu'tazilites, and his acceptance of the legitimacy of the first two caliphs earned him the full sympathy of the traditionist circles. These combinations reveal two fundamental points. Firstly, Zayd and his close followers rejected the ideas prevailing among other Shi'i groups. Zayd and his followers wanted .no quiescent or hidden Imams, like Al- Baqir and Ibn al-Hanafiya

,The Imam

in their eyes, although he had to be a descendant of 'Ali and Fatima, yet could not claim allegiance unless he asserted his Imamate publicly. Secondly, Zayd realized the fact that in order to run for the caliphate, he must have the main body of Muslim opinion behind him, and must, therefore, accept the main body of Islamic traditions. Thus he expressed this attitude by declaring his acceptance of Abu Bakr and 'Umar as legally elected caliphs. At the same time, he maintained the Shi'I belief that 'Ali was superior; nevertheless, he accepted the “Imamate of the Inferior” (Mafdul), that is, of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, as permissible in order to secure certain temporary (advantages.(۱

After the death of Al-Baqir, Ja'far maintained his father's policy towards Zayd and his movement and remained a rather passive spectator. Being the uncle of Ja'far, Zayd had the superior position and Ja'far could not dare to deny his merits outwardly. It does not mean, however, that Ja'far did not have a close group of his own followers whom he inherited from his father and who resisted the Zaydite viewpoint Moreover,

the concession to non-Shi'is 'given by Zayd, especially his emphasis on the rights of the first two caliphs, raised objections and ultimately caused many zealous Shi'is to abandon him. They revoked their oath and transferred their allegiance to Ja'far.(۲)

According to one tradition Zayd said to the deserters: "You have abandoned me (rafadtumuni)" and zealous Shi'is have since been called Rafida.(۳) A party of Kufan Shi'is

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۱- See Montgomery Watt, "Shi'ism Under the Ummayyads", JRAS, ۱۹۶۰, pp.۱۶۹ f.

۲- Tabari, II, p.۱۷۰۰

۳- Tabari, loc. cit. For the use and meaning of the word Rafidi see Montgomery Watt, "The Rafidites", Oriens, XVI (۱۹۶۳), p.۱۱۶

went to Medina and informed Ja'far of Zayd's ideas and activities. Maintaining his regard for his uncle, Ja'far simply said, "Zayd was the best of us and our master."(۱)

Zayd's revolt took place in Safar ۱۲۲/December ۷۴۰ and was unsuccessful. He himself was killed, and many of his followers were massacred.(۲) The Caliph Hisham then commanded that all eminent Talibis should publicly dissociate themselves from the insurrection and condemn its leader.(۳) Among them were 'Abd Allah b. Mu'awiya and 'Abd Allah al-Mahd,(۴) but the name of Ja'far as-Sadiq is nowhere mentioned. It shows that Ja'far must have shown himself distinctly and categorically opposed to the movements of the activist members of the family. It also recalls the time of Ja'far's grandfather, Zayn al-'Abidin, in the reign of Yazid, when, after the suppression of the Medinese revolt, all of Banu Hashim were forced to swear allegiance and declare themselves slaves of the Caliph, while Zayn al-'Abidin was exempted.(۵) Now Ja'far was spared in a similar situation, which indicates the continuity of the same policy in the legitimist line.

Zayd's son Yahya, however, continued his father's activities and managed to reach Khurasan in order to win the sympathies of the Kufan Shi'is, whom Al-Hajjaj and other Umayyad viceroys of Iraq had exiled to that distant province. But in ۱۲۵/۷۴۳, after three years' futile efforts, Yahya met the same fate as his father.(۶) Zayd's movement, in fact, was unable to captivate the hearts of the activist groups because he did not claim to be the

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.Tabari, loc. cit -۱

.Tabari, II, p.۱۷۰۹; Abul-Faraj, Maqatil, pp.۱۴۰ f -۲

Jahiz Bayan, I, p.۳۱۱-۳۱۲ -۳

.ibid -۴

Mubarrad, Kamil, I, p. ۲۶۰ -۵

.See Tabari, II, p.۱۷۷۴; Abul-Faraj, Maqatil, pp.۱۵۲ ff -۶

Mahdi-an idea which had become so dear to the Shi'i masses. Moreover, his moderate policy eventually deprived him of the popular support of the Shi'is. Yet his revolt left a very deep mark upon the development of the whole Shi'i movement. Numerous learned men of Kufa, among them the great jurists Abu Hanifa an-Nu'man and Sufyan ath-Thawri, the traditionist Al-A'mash, the Qadi of Mada'in Hilal b. Hubab, and others, along with other leaders from other cities, supported or at least sympathized with his cause.(۱)

The movement of Zayd, however, though it ended in failure, paved the way for other claimants and offered ready ground for a more effective revolt. His and his son's deaths, which created a vacuum for active leadership, enhanced the prospects of two of their relatives and hitherto rivals: Ja'far as-Sadiq and Muhammad an-Nafs az-Zakiya. Since the former adhered to the quiescent policy of his father and grandfather, he was not inclined to make a bid for the leadership of an active

.movement with political implication

Here we should note that the whole of Shi'ism at this stage was divided into three doctrinal groups. Firstly, there were the extremist and messianic groups originating from the Kaysanites; secondly, there was the moderate group which emerged from the teachings of Zayd and was backed by the Mu'tazilites and the traditionists of Medina and Kufa; and finally, the third group was under the personal influence of Ja'far as-Sadiq, who had been quietly propounding and expressing his own views and theories about the

p: ٣۶۵

.Abul-Faraj, Maqatil, pp.١۴۵ ff -١

Imam and his function, which had neither Messianic pretensions nor Zaydite .conciliatory moderation, as we shall see later

Thus there remained only Muhammad an-Nafs az-Zakiya, from the House of the Prophet, who could attract both the Zaydites and the pro-Shi'i Mu'tazilites as well as a number of extremists on account of his Messianic claims. Though the actual revolt of An-Nafs az-Zakiya took place long after, in the sequence of events it would be in .order to note that his Messianic movement in fact originates at this point

Muhammad an-Nafs az-Zakiya was designated from his childhood for the role of Al-Mahdi by his father 'Abd Allah b. al-Hasan al-Muthanna b. al-Hasan b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib, known as Al-Mahd. A grandson of Hasan b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib, Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah was renowned as one of the most virtuous men of his time and was famous for his religious learning and eloquence.(١) When he reached manhood 'Abd Allah spared no efforts to extol the expected destiny of his son. A tradition from the Prophet on the

authority of 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud was circulated, in which the Prophet is reported to :have said

Even if there remains for the world but one single day, God will extend it until He" sends a man from the people of my House, whose name will he the same as mine, and the name of his father will be that of my father. He will fill the earth with equity and justice, just as it now is

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۱- See Jahiz,, Bayan, I, p.۳۵۳; Abul-Faraj, Maqatil, pp.۲۳۳ ff.

(filled with tyranny and oppression."(۱)

As this tradition could also be applied to Muhammad al- Mahdi, the son of Manstir,(۲) another tradition was produced to assure the role of the Deliverer to An-Nafs az-Zakiya: "On the authority of Umm Salima, who reported; 'I heard the Apostle of God (say, Al-Mahdi will be from the descent of Fitima.'"(۳)

The candidature of An-Nafs az-Zakiya for the position of the Mahdi was supported not only by his close relatives, but also by the extremist Al-Mughira b. Sa'id al-Ijli.(۴) He had a reputation for being an extremist Shi'i, and Ja'far as-Sadiq repeatedly (warned his followers not to accept Mughira's traditions.'(۵)

Even after Al-Mughira was executed, his followers remained faithful to An-Nafs az-Zakiya.(۶) Besides, a number of moderate traditionists as well as the Mu'tazilites, led by 'Amr b. 'Ubayd and Wasil b. 'Ata',(۷) recognized the young 'Alid as the most suitable (person to take the place vacated by Zayd and Yahya.(۸)

After the death of Al-Walid b. Yazid, however, when the Umayyad dynasty was apparently disintegrating and the revolt of 'Abd' Allah b. Mu'awiya had gained a certain success in Khurasan, 'Abd Allah al-Mahd, along with other partisans of the 'Alid cause, decided to act.(۹) During a pilgrimage to Mecca, 'Abd Allah al-Mahd invited his relatives and followers to take the oath of allegiance to his son. That was done first in the Haram of Mecca and again at Al-Abwa, in the neighbourhood of Medina.(۱۰) According to Abu'l-Faraj,(۱۱) among those who took the oath were the three 'Abbasid brothers

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۱- Abu Da'ud, Sunan, II, p.۱۳۵

۲- See Aghani, XII, p.۸۵

۳- Aba Da'ud, Sunan, II, p.۱۳۵; Ibn Maja, Sunan, II, p.۲۶۹

۴- Sa'd al-Ash'ari, Maqalat, pp.۷۴, ۷۷; Nawbakhti, Firaq, p.۵۹

۵- Sa'd al-Ash'ari, Maqalat, p.۷۷; Nawbakhti, Firaq, p.۴۳

۶- Nawbakhti, Firaq, p.۵۲; Baghdadi, Farq, pp.۳۶ ff.; Sa'd al- Ash'ari, Maqalat, p.۷۴

۷- Abu'l-Faraj, Maqatil, pp.۲۰۹ f., ۲۹۲ ff.

۸- ibid.

۹- Tabari, III, pp.۱۴۳ ff.; Abu'l-Faraj, Maqatil, pp.۲۰۶, ۲۵۳

۱۰- Tabari, III, p.۵۲; Abu'l-Faraj, Maqatil, pp.۲۰۹, ۲۵۶. For Al-Abwa, see Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan, I, p.۷۹. According to another report, this homage was paid at Suwayqa; See Abu'l-Faraj, Maqatil, pp.۲۹۳ ff.; E۱۱ article 'Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah"

۱۱- Abu'l-Faraj, Maqatil pp.۲۰۸,۲۵۳, ۱۷۸

Ibrahim al-Imam, Abu'l-Abbas as-Saffah and Aba Ja'far al-Mansur (b. Muhammad b. 'Ali b. 'Abd Allah b. al-Abbas) as well as other members of the 'Abbasid house. There is no confirmation of this report that all these Abbasids took part in the ceremony at Al-Abwa Only the name of Aba Ja'far al-Mansur is given by some other historians.(۱)

This latter report seems acceptable as Al-Mansur in his youth was a Mu'tazihte(۲) and

a companion of 'Amr b. 'Ubayd,(۳) who probably induced him to pay homage to An-Nafs az-Zakiya. The only opposition from the Hashimites to An-Nafs az-Zakiya at Al-Abwa is reported to have come from Ja'far as-Sadiq's side,(۴) for he considered himself the only rightful person for the function of the Imamate, and was against any .military organization

However, in spite of An-Nafs az-Zakiya's popularity, neither he nor his father acted with sufficient energy, and they allowed the 'Abbasids to take the initiative. Both the father and the son were but passive spectators' to the great upheaval and downfall of the Umayyad dynasty. Indeed, all the necessary elements for a successful revolution were present, and it was only a matter of strike and action. Whoever could strike first .would gain the prize

Ideas as to who should and who should not be regarded as the Ahl al-Bayt were no doubt much confused at this time. Every claimant in 'Ali's family and their supporters and followers spread different theories to justify their own claims One group of the Shi'is held that after 'Ali only

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۱- See, for example, Tabari III, p. ۱۵۲

۲- Tabari, III, pp.۱۴۳, ۱۵۲; EI۱ article "Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah"

۳- Abu'l-Faraj, Maqatil, p. ۲۰۹

۴- Abu'l-Faraj, Maqatil, pp.۲۰۷ f, ۲۵۴ ff; EI۱ article "Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah"

the sons through Fatima had the right to the heritage of the Prophet as the "family of the Prophet", and among them, since Husayn succeeded Hasan by the latter's expressed will, all rights were transferred to Husayn and his posterity to the exclusion of the Hasanid branch. This group, which we are referring to as the legitimist faction of the Shi'a, though it never ceased to make its existence felt, was undoubtedly

reduced to a small minority at this particular time, after the Tawwabun movement. others believed that any descendant of 'Ali and Fatima, whether from the line of Husayn or Hasan, was entitled to the leadership of the community. In this group come the followers of Zayd and An-Nafs az-Zakiya. The third and major group of the Shi'a in this transitional period, the Kaysanites, included also 'Ali's progeny by other women, in particular Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya and after him his son Abu Hashim. These distinctions were largely understood and observed by the more theoretical and legalistically-minded people in Medina and Kufa. The mass of the people, however, full of hatred, discontent, and the feeling of being suppressed by the Umayyad aristocracy, were ready to swarm around any member of the revered clan of the .Talibis who could liberate them from their sufferings

Swayed by these feelings, therefore, a large part of the local population of Kufa, especially of the lower classes, were prepared to range themselves with any anti-Umayyad movement. Such was the support given to the dubious claims of

Abd Allah b. Mu'awiya,(۱) a great-grandson of 'Ali's elder brother Ja'far b. Abi Talib.' Tabari mentions that the majority of his supporters consisted of the slaves and commoners of Kufa and the villagers of the Sawad.(۲) After an unsuccessful rising in Kufa, Ibn Mu'awiya managed to reach Persia and controlled a large area there until he was assassinated, probably by Aba Muslim.(۳) It might be accepted that Ibn Mu'awiya attained success in Persia by connecting himself with the Kaysaniya through the claim that he was the emissary of Aba Hashim. Ibn Mu'awiya's propaganda in Khurasan, however, made the task easier for a more vigorous leader .to organize a successful revolt

After all the preceding movements and revolts, the time was now ripe for a successful rising which was not, in fact, in favour of an 'Alid; but rather for the 'Abbasids, who had

for some time been plotting in the background and watching for their opportunity. 'Ali b. 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas b. 'Abd al- Muttalib was the first person of the Abbasid house to nourish political ambitions, but had nothing tangible to support him from a legal point of view. His grandfather Al-'Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet, had never claimed the caliphate for himself Moreover, his being a late convert to Islam and his opportunistic policy(۴) had marred his reputation among the Muslims. 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas too, though renowned for his learning, had no political a۸pirations and always championed the cause of 'Ali b. Abi Talib.(۵) He was

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See Aghani, XII, pp. ۲۱۳ ff; Tabari, II, pp. ۱۸۷۹, ۱۸۸۱; Montgomery Watt, "Shi'ism - ۱ Under the Umayyads", p.۱۷۰

Tabari, II, pp. ۱۸۸۱, ۱۸۸۳, ۱۸۸۷ -۲

See Montgomery Watt, "Shi'ism Under the Umayyads",p. ۱۷۰ -۳

"See Montgomery Watt, EI۲ article "Abbas b. 'Abd al-Muttalib -۴

.Kashshi, Rijal, pp. ۵۶ f -۵

Ali's governor in Basra and also his personal representative attached to the arbiter' Abu Musa al-Ash'arl.(۱) It is possible that 'Ali b. 'Abd Allah might have been inspired by certain rights based on old tribal customs. The Meccan clan of Priest-Sayyids included all the descendants of 'Abd al-Muttalib, and so, from the viewpoint of legitimism, their claims were better than those of the Banu Umayya, which were based mainly on political factors. The Umayyads on their part endeavoured to prove that the whole (clan of the Banu 'Abd Manaf were the ruling house of the Quraysh.(۲

Nevertheless, even if 'Abbas, once the custodian of the Ka'ba, and his progeny had as strong a claim to supreme leadership as 'Ali b. Abi Talib, the 'Abbasids had neglected it for too long. Moreover, the fact that 'Ali was one of the earliest converts to Islam, while 'Abbas tarried until the conquest of Mecca, was detrimental to the position of the 'Abbasids within the Muslim community. Then, the Shi'is had accustomed themselves to the idea that the rights to the caliphate belonged to the 'Alids. Obviously, therefore, it was not possible for the 'Abbasids to claim the caliphate

.directly

Ali b. 'Abd Allah saw an opportunity, in inducing Abu Hashim, the son and successor of' Ibn al-Hanafiya, who had no son and was a lonely person under the detention of the Umayyads in Damascus, to bequeath to the 'Abbasids his rights to the Imamate. He instructed his youthful son Muhammad to gain the Imam's

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"See Kashshi Rijal, pp. ٥٧ ff; Veccia Vaglieri, EI٢ article "Abd Allah b. 'Abbas -١

Mubarrad, Kamil, I, p. ١٨٠ -٢

favour and confidence. After some time, the Caliph Sulayman b. 'Abd al-Malik allowed Abu Hashim to return home. On his way to the Hijaz, it issaid that he was poisoned, either at the instigation of the Caliph Sulayman or by Muhammad on his own (account.(١

He died at Humayma, the headquarters of the 'Abbasids, where he stayed as the latter's guest. Before his death he made Muhammad b. 'Ali his legatee and gave him letters addressed to Shi'i circles in Khurasan.(٢) In this way Muhammad became Imam and was recognized by the majority of the Hashimiya sect, and thus "the 'Abbasids (inherited the party and organization of Abu Hashim, along with his claims."(٣

Though the 'Abbasid movement was first organized and directed from Kufa, it seems that the 'Abbasids were not very sure of the Kufans, due to the latters' pro-'Alid sympathies, and so were afraid that the Iraqis would be unwilling to accept their claims to the Imamate. Although many of the Hashimiya sectarians recognized the validity of the 'Abbasids' claims, some of them refused to accept the transfer of the Imamate from the 'Alids to another branch of the Hashimites. This was particularly

characteristic of the attitude of the Kufans, whose pro-'Alid sympathies were very strong. Some Shi'is believed that Abu Hashim was not dead, but had concealed himself, and that he was Al-Mahdi. Others admitted that he had died, but had appointed his brother 'Ali to the Imamate, which then passed from father to son in the same line.(۴)

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۱ - See Abu'l-Faraj, Maqatil, p.۱۲۶; Kamil V, pp. ۳۲-۹ S. Moscati, “Testamento di Abu Hashim”, RSO, XXVII (۱۹۵۲), pp. ۲۴-۸

۲ - Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p.۲۳۸; Abu'l-Faraj, loc. cit.; Kamil loc. Cit; Moscati, loc. cit; Bernard Lewis, EI۲ article 'Hashimiya"

۳- 'Abbasid ” and “Hashimiya” articles EI۲ Lewis,”?

۴- See Nawbakhti, Firaq, pp. ۲۸-۲۹; Nashwan al-Himyari; Hurr al-Ayn, pp. ۱۵۹-۶۰

the other hand, Khurasan was still largely a virgin land insofar as sectarian conflicts were concerned. The majority of the so-called Shi'is in that distant country were not so much interested in the differences between the various branches of the Ahl al-Bayt, but they were ready to follow any leader from the House of the Prophet against the Umayyads.(۱) Still, Abu Muslim, the chief organizer of the movement, though appointed by Ibrahim,(۲) the head of the 'Abbasid family, claimed to be acting on behalf of an Imam from the Ahl al- Bayt who had not yet been chosen or designated. In this way he gained the support of many who would not have been ready to support him had they known that the Imam from the family of Hashim would in fact be from the family of Al-'Abbas.(۳) The support given by the followers of Al-Mukhtar may strengthen this assumption.

However, Ibrahim was arrested by the orders of the Caliph Marwan b. Muhammad,

brought to Damascus, and subsequently dispatched to Harran and imprisoned, where he died either of plague or-as the 'Abbasids assert-was put to death at the Caliph's command.(۴) According to Ibrahim's instructions, his brother Abu'۱-'Abbas, in the company of a third brother, Abu Ja'far 'Abd Allah, and fourteen other members of the family, left Al-Humayma and reached Kufa.(۵) In Kufa the local representative of the 'Abbasids was Abu Salama Hafs, a Kaysanite follower of Abu Hashim. At this critical moment Abu Salama is reported to have thought of breaking

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۱- For the readiness of the Khurasanians to follow any branch of the Ahl al-Bayt, see Ibn Qutayba, 'Uyun al-Akhbar, I, p. ۲۰۴; Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan, II, p.۳۵۲

۲- Aba Muslim was adopted by Ibrahim as a member of the Ahlal-Bayt; see Tabari, II, pp.۱۹۳۷, '۹۴۹. For Aba Muslim himself, see Ibn Khallikan, III, pp. '۴۵-۵۵; Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p.۲۳۹; Ibn Qutayba, Ma'ani, p.۱۴۵; Dinawari, p.۳۳۷; Tabari II, pp.۱۹۴۹ f., '۹۸۷ ff; R. N. Frye, "The Role of Abu Muslim", Muslim World, January ۱۹۴۷

۳- See Wellhausen, Arab Kingdom, pp.۴۹۲-۵۶۶; Lewis, EI۲ article "Abbasids"

۴- See Tabari III, pp.۲۵ ff., ۴۲ ff., Dinawari; p.۳۵۷; Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p. ۲۴۴

۵- Tabari, III, p.۲۷; Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p.۲۵۳

his allegiance to the 'Abbasids since he felt bound by loyalty to Imam Ibrahim, but not to his brothers.(۱) He lodged the 'Abbasid fugitives in a house and tried to conceal their whereabouts from the Khurasanian leaders in Kufa.(۲)

According to what Jahshiyari and Tabari report, when the news of the death of Ibrahim al-Imam reached Kufa, Abu Salama "on the suggestion and advice of some other Shi'is of Kufa, intended to establish the Imamate of the 'Alids,"(۳) and accordingly he wrote letters to Ja'far as-Sadiq, 'Abd Allah al- Mahd, and 'Umar b. 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin, asking each one of them in turn to come to Kufa in person and he would support their claims to the Imamate.

The messenger was ordered first to contact Ja'far, and only if he refused, then to go

to 'Abd Allah, and in case of his refusal, to 'Umar b. 'Ali. When the messenger, however, presented the letter first to Ja'far, the latter called for a lamp, burned the letter, and said to the messenger, "Tell your master what you have seen." (۴) Mas'udi tells the story in a different colour, saying: "When the 'Abbasid leader Ibrahim al-Imam was killed by Marwan II, Abu Salama feared that this would mean the failure of their undertaking, and he attempted therefore to induce Ja'far as Sadiq, and in case he refused, then 'Abd Allah and lastly 'Umar b. 'Ali, to come to him in person and to openly declare his claims to the Imamate."(۵)

The same story asserts that

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۱- Jahshiyari, Al-Wuzara' wa'l-Kuttab, p.۸۳; Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p.۲۵۳; Ibn Khallikan, III, pp.۱۴۸ f; Tabari, III, pp.۲۷ f.; Ya'qubi, II, pp. ۳۴۵, ۴۴۹

۲- Mas'udi, loc. cit.; Tabari, loc. cit; Wellhausen, Arab Kingdom, p.۵۴۴; S. Moscati, EI۲ article "Abu Salama"

۳- Jahshiyari; Al-Wuzara' wa'l-Kuttab, p.۸۶; Tabari; III, p.۲۷

۴- Jahshiyari, loc. cit.; Ibn Tiqtaqa, Al-Fakhri P. ۱۰۹

۵- Mas'udi Muruj, III, p.۲۵۳ f.

Abd Allah al-Mahd accepted the offer and was only too delighted to receive the help' of Abu Salama. Ja'far as-Sadiq, in all the sources which have recorded this story, is reported to have severely warned 'Abd Allah "not to indulge and endanger his and his son's life in this game of power and treachery, as Abu Salama is not our Shi'a and the Khurasanians are not our followers." 'Abd Allah bitingly retorted, "You are jealous of me and my son."(۱) If this conversation is true it would throw light on Ja'far's extremely cautious policy of keeping entirely out of politics. As for Abu Salama, Moscati points out that in his wavering attitude "one can perhaps see a consequence of the deliberate ambiguity about the rights of the 'House of the Prophet', put into circulation by the revolutionary propaganda."(۲)

The events in Kufa moved quickly in favour of the 'Abbasids. Their presence or concealment(۳) in Kufa was betrayed through one Abu Jahm to Abu Humayd, who, with other Khurasanian chiefs encamped in the vicinity of Kufa, came and at once paid homage to Abu'l-'Abbas(۴) as the Imam and Caliph, compelling Abu Salama to (comply.(۵

Immediately after, Abu'l-'Abbas, together with hi۸ supporters, went to the mosque where he made his inaugural speech. In this speech he named himself as-Saffah (the Bloodshedder) and identified the glory of God with his own interests and those of his house. He named "the Abbasids as the Ahl al-Bayt from whom uncleanness was removed", and denied that the 'Alids

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See Ya'qubi loc. cit.; Mas'udi; loc. cit.; Jahshiyari, loc. cit -۱

"S. Moscati, EI۲ article "Aba Salama -۲

Ya'qubi, II, p.۳۴۵, gives the period of concealment as two months; Tabari III, p.۲۷, -۳ .makes it forty day Other sources do not mention the precise period

"See Lewis, EI۲ article "'Abbisids -۴

Tabari, III, pp.۲۸ ff.; Jahshiyari Al-Wuzara', pp.۸۶ ff.; Ya'qabi II, pp.۳۴۵ f; Mas'udi, -۵ .Muruj, III, pp.۲۵۵ f

were more worthy of the caliphate.(۱) As-Saffah's address was followed by a speech from his uncle, Da'ud b. 'Ali, who emphasized that the rights of the 'Abbasids were legally inherited and there were but two legal caliphs in Islam: 'Ali b. Abi Talib and As-Saffah. He added that the caliphate would remain in the hands of the 'Abbasids until (they passed it over to 'Isa b. Maryam (Jesus).(۲

The accession of Abu'l-'Abbas was followed immediately by the first breach with the extremist Shi'is. The testament of Abu Hashim was of the utmost importance to the 'Abbasids, for at the onset of their propaganda it allowed them to take over the sectarian circles in Persia and so establish the nucleus of their own religio-political party. Once the aim was achieved, the 'Abbasids, on their own accession to the caliphate, justified their rights by different arguments, without even mentioning Abu Hashim's name. Now they found it necessary to allow the memory of the bequest to pass into oblivion, for its connections with Shi'i extremism were too strong and could .be dangerous or embarrassing

The first task, therefore, before As-Saffah was to break the alliance with the extremists and to remove those who supported the cause basically on that sectarian ground. Thus the first who had to pay with his life was Abu Salama, either on account of his strong connections with the extremist Shi'is or because of his alleged pro-'Alid leanings and his offer of support for their bid for the caliphate. The

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۱- Tabari, III, pp. ۲۹ ff Ya'qubi, II, p.۳۵۰, says Abu'l-'Abbas did not speak at all because .of fever. Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p.۲۵۵ gives only a summary of the speech in two lines

۲- The speech of Da'ud is widely recorded, esp. Tabari, III, pp.۳۱ ff; Ya'qubi, II, p.۳۵۰. .Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p.۲۵۶ again only summarizes the main points

second reason cannot be completely ignored as an immediate cause of his assassination. There seems no difficulty in accepting that, at first, knowing nothing about Abu Salama's recent pro'-Alid activities, the 'Abbasids called him by. the title Wazir Al Rasul Allah,(۱) but as soon as As-Saffah came to know about his fickleness he successfully arranged for his assassination. This is what both Tabari and Mas'udi clearly describe as the reason for Aba Salama's assassination.(۲) Nevertheless, this immediate cause was coupled with As-Saffah's policy to get rid of revolutionary .sectarians, of whom Abu Salama was the most powerful leader

As-Saffah's rule lasted for four years, during which period the 'Alids in Medina, “disorganized by the frustration of their hopes”,(۳) kept quiet and affairs remained stationary. But when Mansur assumed the caliphate in ۱۳۶/۷۵۳, the 'Alids, embittered by the usurpation of their rights by the house of 'Abbas, began to voice their complaints. On the other hand, except for the shi'at Bani 'Abbas, who regarded As-Saffah not only as Caliph and Imam but also as the Mahdi, the Shi'I masses were also dissatisfied; and this popular dissatisfaction, which became manifest even during As-Saffah's rule,(۴) grew with the accession of Al-Mansur. They felt that the expected Kingdom of Righteousness had not materialised: one evil rule had been replaced by .another

Thus, at the accession of Mansur, Muhammad an-Nafs az-Zakiya, who had long been coveting the role of Al-Mahdi, refused to take the oath of allegiance to him and ,started his Messianic propaganda. This angered Mansur

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۱- See Tabari, III, pp.۶۰ f.; Ya'qubi, II, pp.۳۵۲ f.; Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p.۲۷۰; Ibn Khallikan, II, p. ۱۹۶

۲- .See Tabari; III, pp. ۵۸ ff; Mas'udi, loc. cit

۳- Lewis, EI۲ article "'Abbasids"

۴- See Tabari, III, pp.۷۵ f., ۸۵; Maqrizi an-Niza', p.۵۲

and in ۱۴۰/۷۵۸ he decided to compel An-Nafs az-Zakiya and his brother Ibrahim to pay him homage. He ordered the arrest of 'Abd Allah al-Mahd and many other 'Alids; of the thirteen arrested, some were cruelly scourged to try to force them to disclose the hiding place of the other fugitives, but in vain.(۱)

It is important to note that though An-Nafs az-Zakiya tried to gain support in many parts of the Muslim population,(۲) it was chiefly the people of the Hijaz, rather than Kufa, who enthusiastically responded to his appeal, and with few exceptions, swore the oath of allegiance to him.(۳) The traditionist circles of Medina wholeheartedly

supported and upheld his cause; Malik b. Anas declared that the oath sworn to the 'Abbasids was no longer binding as it had been taken under compulsion.(۴) The Zaydites and Mu'tazilites of Kufa and Basra were also ready to help him.(۵) In Ramadan ۱۴۵/December ۷۶۲, however, a fierce battle was engaged and resulted in the utter defeat of the Medinese and in the death of An-Nafs az-Zakiya while fighting the 'Abbasid army. The experience and death of An-Nafs az-Zakiya resulted in many traditions, some of them attributed to Ja'far as-Sadiq, who was said to have foreseen the fate of An-Nafs az-Zakiya.(۶)

An-Nafs az-Zakiya's abortive uprising was followed by another by his brother Ibrahim in Basra, where he was collecting supporters for the former. The Zaydite and Mu'tazilite circles of Kufa and Basra supported Ibrahim in a body.(۷)

The jurists of Ku fa-Abu Hanifa, Sufyan al-Thawri,

۱- Ya'qubi, II, p.۳۶۹; Mas'udi, Muruj, III, p.۲۹۵; Tabari, III, pp.۱۵۱ ff.

۲- See Tabari, III, pp.۱۴۹ ff.

۳- Tabari, III, p.۱۹۹; Abu'l-Faraj, Maqatil, pp.۲۷۷ ff.

۴- Tabari, III, p.۲۰۰

۵- Abu'l-Faraj, Maqatil, pp.۲۹۱ ff.

۶- Tabari, III, pp.۲۴۸, ۲۵۲, ۲۵۴; Abu'l-Faraj, Maqatil, pp.۲۴۸, ۲۷۱; Shahrastani, Milal, I, p. ۱۵۶

۷- Tabari, III, pp.۲۹۱-۳۰۰. For the names and details see Abu'l- Faraj, Maqatil, pp.۳۶۰ f., ۳۶۵ ff.

Mas'ud b. Kudam, and many others-wrote letters to Ibrahim inviting him to their city or backed him by issuing legal decisions (fatawa) favouring his cause.(۱) With a force of ۱۵,۰۰۰ men Ibrahim left Basra for Kufa to join his Kufan sympathisers, but was

encountered by the 'Abbasid army at Bakhamra, which resulted in Ibrahim's death.(2)

This was the end of 'Alid risings of any consequence and of Messianic hopes aspired to by them or placed in them. Some of An-Nafs az-Zakiya's followers then found an outlet for their hopes in certain supernatural ideas. They regarded him as the Mahdi and refused to accept the fact of his death, asserting that orly a devil in human form had been killed in his stead, while he was concealed in a mountain in Najd.(3) The failure of Ibrahim's revolt also practically marked the end of the Medinese desire to establish a caliphate of their own choice. The long cherished hopes of the Shi'is, especially those of activists and extremists, were frustrated.

All these events and circumstances, however, form the background against which the Imamate of Ja'far happened to fall. Rut before we try to examine his position and his standpoint in this religio-political setting, there remains still another vital aspect to be elaborated.

We have seen that the great Hashimite party of the Umayyad era was now split into 'Alids and 'Abbasids. So the struggle assumed a new form. It was no longer a deadly struggle between "a usurping dynasty" and a legitimist opposition, but

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۱- Abu'l-Faraj, Maqatil, pp.۳۶۵ ff.

۲- ibid., pp. ۳۴۴ ff.

۳- Baghdadi, Farq, pp.۳۶ ff., ۱۴۸; Sa'd al-Ash'ari, Maqatil, p.۷۶

rather between the two factions of Banu Hashim, each claiming legitimist rights for itself with the total exclusion of the other: the descendants of the Prophet's uncle and the descendants of the Prophet's cousin and daughter, 'Ali and Fatima. And to further complicate the situation, the house of 'Ali was itself divided into three factions: the line

of Husayn; the line of Ibn al-Hanafiya; and the line of Hasan, which emerged later. Thus the house of

Abbas was on one side, and the house of 'Ali, divided into three groups, was on the' .other

The first 'Abbasid caliph, As-Saffah, fully anticipated this situation and from the very first moment of his caliphate began the task of justifying the rights of his house on legitimist grounds, as is evident from his inaugural speech discussed above. In this way he laid down the foundation of his family's policy in the forthcoming struggle to repudiate the claims of the house of 'Ali. But, owing to the fact that during the short lived reign of As-Saffah the 'Alids themselves could not come out with any serious or .visible opposition, things remained rather confused and stationary

It was Mansur who had to face the most threatening opposition from the 'Alids to the newly established authority of his house. Thus in order to save, strengthen, and consolidate his caliphate, Mansur concentrated his efforts on two basic and fundamental objectives. The first was to justify the rights of his house on legal and religious grounds. This logically implied the repudiation

of the claims of the 'Alids through legal argumentation. The second was to gain for his .caliphate the acceptance of the Muslim Jama'a

This required the severance of all relations and connections with all revolutionary and extremist groups and organizations. Mansur realized only too well that Kaysanite Shi'ism, Rawandite extremism,(۱) revolutionaries of Abu Muslim's following (who held beliefs which comprised a mixture of Kaysanite Shi'ism and Mazdakism), or the Shi'at

of 'Abbasiya, could not serve as the religious basis for the 'Abbasid caliphate. Repudiating all of the above groups, Mansur approached the traditionist circles (Ahl al-Hadith), which he recognized as the representative section of the Muslim community and the exponents of 'the Jama'a. It would be in order if we consider this aspect later and examine first his endeavour to vindicate the rights of his house to the .caliphate

The best and probably the most authentic and relevant documentary evidence in this connection is an exchange of letters between Mansur and his most serious 'Alid rival, Muhammad an-Nafs az-Zakiya. In order to understand Mansur's method of argumentation and his approach to the problem it is necessary to first consider An-:Nafs az-Zakiya's letter to him. It reads

Our father 'Ali was the Wasi and the Imam. How is it that you appropriate his" inheritance while we are still alive? You know that there is no one among the Hashimites who himself has points of excellence and honour comparable to our past and present, our descent and our cause ... We are the children

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۱- The name Rawindiya is given to the sect which held that Aba Hashim bequeathed the Imamate to Muhammad b. 'Ali (the 'Abbasid). See Lewis, Origins of Isma'ilism, p.۲۸

of Fatima, the daughter of 'Amr, at the time of paganism, whereas you are not; we are the children of the Prophet's daughter Fatima at the time of Islam, and you are .not

And I happen to be the golden medium in the line of descent amongst Banu Hashim, and the best of them all as regards parentage. No Persian did I have for a mother and no slave-girls were on the maternal side of my ancestors...(۱) I was twice-born from

the loins of Muhammad the Prophet ... amongst my grandfathers I have the highly esteemed in Paradise and the least tormented in Hell; I am therefore the son of the best of the excellent people. 'As for the amnesty you have given me, may I ask what kind of amnesty it is? Is it the same that you gave to Ibn Hubayra or to your uncle 'Abd Allah b. 'Ali or the one that was given to Abu Muslim ?"(۲)

It is clear from this letter that first of all An-Nafs az-Zakiya claims his rights on the basis that his ancestor 'Ali b. Abu Talib was the Wasi and the Imam, and then he strengthens this by emphasizing the circumstance of his birth from both his father's and his mother's sides: sharaf from the father's side and dignity from the mother's side. At the end he alludes to the treacherous nature of the 'Abbasids. It is particularly interesting to note that in spite of his reference to 'Ali as the

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۱- Mansur himself was a son of a slave-girl, and perhaps it was because of this that, though he was older than As-Saffah, Ibrahim al-Imam did not appoint him as his successor.

۲- Mubarrad, Kamil, IV, pp. ۱۱۴ f; Tabari, III, pp.۲۰۹ ff.; Ibn Tiqtaqa, AI-Fakhri; pp.۲۲۵ ff

Wasi and the Imam, and to Fatimid descent,(۱) the Hijaz was unanimous in supporting the cause of An-Nafs az-Zakiya.

It would be most revealing to see how Mansur argued against the claims of his 'Alid rival and how he justified his own rights to the supreme leadership of the community. Mansur replied to An-Nafs az-Zakiya in this way:

"I received your letter. You know that our greatest honour in the times of ignorance, namely the dispensing of water for the pilgrims and the guardianship of the well of

Zamzam, become the privilege of 'Abbas alone among all his brothers. Your father ['Ali] litigated concerning this privilege with us' but 'Umar has given judgement in our favour so that we have never ceased to be in possession of this honour in the times of the Jahiliya as well as in those of Islam...

"Most of your pride is based on descent from the mother's side,(۲) which would only deceive the uncouth and the common. God has not made the women like uncles, fathers, fathers-in-law and the responsible relatives... As for your claim that you are the son of the Apostle of God, Almighty God has rejected such a claim when he said, 'Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Apostle of God and the Seal of the Prophets.'(۳) But you are the children of the daughter. Verily it is a close relationship, but she is a woman who can inherit but cannot become an Imam. How on

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۱- Tabari, III, p.۱۸۹

۲ - i.e., Fatima, the mother of Abu Talib; Fatima, the mother of 'Ali; Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet; Fatima bint al-Husayn, the mother of 'Abd Allah al-Mahd; and finally Hind bint Abi 'Ubayda, a descendant of 'Abd al-Muttalib, the mother of An-Nafs az-Zakiya. See Abu'l-Faraj, Maqatil, p.۲۰۲. Mansur belittled this "descent through women", being himself a son of a slave-girl.

۳- Qur'an, XXXIII, ۴۰

earth then could the Imamate be inherited through her?... You know that after the death of the Prophet no son of 'Abd al-Muttalib remained alive other than Al-'Abbas, and that 'Abbas inherited his rights as the uncle of the Prophet. Then more than one of the Banu Hashim sought the caliphate, but none attained it except the descendants of 'Abbas, and so the Siqaya and the inheritance of the Prophet, as well as the caliphate, belong to him and his progeny, and will remain in their possession. For 'Abbas was heir and legatee to every honour and virtue that ever existed in the times of the Jahiliya and of Islam."(۱)

This letter is a most important document for our understanding of the line of argument which Mansur adopted against his 'Alid rivals. If we analyse the contents of the letter the following points will be evident. Firstly, he resorted to the customary law of the Arabs according to which when the lather dies, the paternal uncle takes his place. Secondly, he placed special stress on 'Umar's ruling in favour of 'Abbas thus emphasizing the second caliph's authority in the same way as the Ashab al-Hadith. Thirdly, 'Abbas, as the uncle, had better claims to the heritage of the Prophet than 'Ali did as a cousin and son-in-law. Fourthly, he rejected any claim through Fatima, which was a great prerogative for commanding respect among the Shi'is in particular and among the Muslims in general. Finally, the 'Alids, due to the weakness of

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.Tabari, III, pp.۲۱۱ ff; Mubarrad, Kamil IV, pp. ۱۱۶ ff -۱

their legal claim, coupled with their lack of energy, successively failed in their attempts to procure the caliphate for themselves, while the progeny of 'Abbas attained it due to their better claims, coupled with competence and ability. It is also very important to note that both An- Nafs az-Zakiya and Mansur go back for their arguments of rights to the Jahiliya period and consider the prerogative of that time .honourable and applicable to the Islamic era

It is, however, evident from the support given to the risings of An-Nafs az-Zakiya and his brother Ibrahim, which took place after this correspondence, by the Ahl al-Hadith (whether of Murjite brand or otherwise) that they were not impressed by the arguments of Mansur for the alleged rights of 'Abbas; they continued to assert that the only just candidates to the Imamate were the 'Alids. We have pointed out that when An-Nafs az-Zakiya rose in rebellion, Malik b. Anas declared that the oath of allegiance taken by the inhabitants of Medina to the 'Abbasids was unlawful, as it had been enforced under duress.Similarly, during the revolt of Ibrahim b. 'Abd Allah, Abu

Hanifa, Sufyan ath-Thawri, Al-A'mash and other Ku fan jurists and Ahl al-Hadith gave their most emphatic support and encouragement to those who wished to participate in insurrection.(١)

After the reconquest of Medina and the suppression of the revolt of Ibrahim, Mansur ordered Malik b. Anas to be flogged, and considered Abu Hanifa as an enemy so dangerous that he imprisoned him until his death.(٢)

p: ٣٨٥

١- Khatib al-Baghdadi, Ta'rikh Baghdad, XIII, p.٣٨٠; Abu'l- Faraj, Maqatil, pp.٣٦٦ ff., ٣٦٥ ff.

٢- Khatib al-Baghdadi; Ta'rikh Baghdad, XIII, p.٤٢٢; Shahrastani, Milal, I, p.١٥٨. Abu'l-Faraj (Maqatil, pp.٣٦٧, ٣٦٨) asserts that Abu Hanifa was poisoned at the orders of the Caliph.

Apart from these few strong and rather irreconcilable personalities who actively opposed him and were to be severely punished, Mansur did not attack the traditionists as such. On the contrary, he regarded them as the basic element on which he could establish the foundation of a theocratic state, headed by the Khalifat Allah, the vice-regent of God, obedience to whom was an absolute religious duty (fard).(١) Thus, for example, when Mansur said in a sermon "Only I am the authority of God upon His earth,"(٢) he was not announcing himself merely as a defender of religion or its protector. He identified his interest with the faith of Islam and treated the will of God as synonymous with his own aims.

Gradually, however, whether because of the fact that no powerful member of the 'Alid house was ready to lead a rising, or due to Mansur's successful policy of blandishment or coercion, most of the Ahl al-Hadith and jurists of Medina and Kufa came to be reconciled with the caliphate. Eventually, willingly or unwillingly, they

.abandoned the 'Alid cause and ranged themselves obediently under Mansur's orders

Now, keeping in view this religio-political setting of events, we are better able to examine the re-emergence of the legitimist Imamate of the Husaynid line under the leadership of Ja'far as-Sadiq, and the role played by him in the midst of these circumstances. By an analysis of all that has been brought out above, one major and fundamental point is certain. All the successive claimants

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Tabari, III, p.۴۲۶. See Arnold, The Caliphate, p. ۵۱. This principle was also stressed by -۱ the later 'Abbasid caliphs; see Tabari, III, p.۱۵۶۵

Tabari, III, p.۴۲۶ -۲

of the 'Alid house based their claims on the principle that they were the rightful Imams due to their virtues and circumstances of birth, and that the Imamate and the :caliphate cannot be separated

therefore it is exclusively their legitimist right as well as their religious duty to take the caliphate back from the usurpers, whether Umayyad or 'Abbasid. In other words, they thought it the function of the rightful Imam to run the caliphal administration, which is meant to establish the rule of justice and equality, and thus it is necessary for an Imam to be a caliph. This principle was accepted by the representative groups of the Muslim Jama'a-Mu'tazilites, Murjites, Ahl al-Hadith and the jurists of Medina and Kufa-which is evident from the wholehearted support given by them to the 'Alid claimants and to their risings. On the other hand, the 'Abbasids too held the same view that the Imamate and the caliphate are inseparable, and a rightful Imam alone has the right to command the caliphal authority. But at the same time they disputed and rejected the claims of the 'Alids for this office and asserted that only they themselves were the legitimist Imam-caliphs. Ultimately Mansur, however, succeeded in crushing the 'Alids and gaining the submission of the representative .groups of the Jama'a

This meant the complete collapse and defeat of the 'Alid claims to the Imamate, since, as they held, the Imamate was bound up with the caliphate, which they had failed to procure for themselves. This critical

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situation, however, required a fresh interpretation and elucidation of the whole concept of the Imamate.

It was at this point that the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq emerged with his comprehensive interpretation of the function of the Imamate. He differed categorically from the hitherto dominating view that an Imam should be a caliph as well, and put forward the idea of dividing the Imamate and the caliphate into two separate institutions until such time as God would make an Imam victorious. This Imam, who must be a descendant of the Prophet through 'Ali and Fatima, derives his exclusive authority, not by political claims but by Nass, that is, explicit designation by the previous Imam, and he inherits the special knowledge of religion coming down in the family from generation to generation. Thus the sphere and domain of this Imam is chiefly religious leadership and the spiritual guidance of the community, not the temporal power.

We shall see in detail in the following chapter how Ja'far elaborated this theory of the Imamate and the nature and function of an Imam. But let us make it clear here that Ja'far was by no means the originator of this theory of the Imamate. We have already pointed out that the idea of a legitimist Imam inspired with special knowledge had already been adopted by Zayn al-'Abidin, and then it was further advanced by Muhammad al-Baqir. It was, however, the time and circumstances which provided Ja'far with a most suitable and propitious opportunity to elaborate and explain

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the ideas propounded by his father and grandfather. This great opportunity therefore

.made Ja'far's Imamate crucial

Before we close this chapter, two more points are to be noted in passing. One is the question whether Ja'far, by presenting the theory pertaining to his own and his father's Imamates, thought of establishing a sect, group, or party of his own, separated from the rest of the Muslims, or whether he wanted his Imamate with the above-mentioned prerogatives to be accepted and acknowledged by the whole body of the Muslim. The audience of Ja'far and the wide range of people whom he addressed and tried to convince is a sufficient proof that Ja'far himself did not intend to establish a separate sect which alone should follow his doctrine of the Imamate. But in the event, only those who had already a background of Shi'i inclination of one sort or another accepted Ja'far's doctrine of the Imamate and ultimately became a .section of the Muslim community distinguishable from the rest of it

The second point is that the doctrine of the Imamate and the function of the Imam elaborated by Ja'far at this stage provided a basic authority for the later Twelver theologians and theorists to explain and solve many problems of the pre-Ja'far period. This was done by applying Ja'far's theory of the Imamate to the actions of the Imams of the House who came before him, for example, 'Ali's acceptance of the first three caliphs, the abdication of Hasan, the inactive attitude of

Husayn and the quiescent policies of Zayn al-'Abidin and Muhammad al-Baqir. All these questions were solved in accordance with Ja'far's explanation that it is not necessary for a rightful Imam to combine the temporal power in his person or even claim the political authority–the caliphate–if the circumstances did not allow him to do so. On the other hand, it can also be said that Ja'far's theory of the Imamate was in .fact a natural corollary of his family's past history and experience

Chapter ١١: The Doctrine of the Imamate

It has been explained in detail in the preceding chapter how the activist claimants of the House of 'Ali were crushed, their apparently popular movements collapsed one after the other, and the 'Abbasids finally managed to firmly establish themselves as the sole authority of both the state and religion. A process of assimilation was set into motion and most of the cross-currents represented by a number of politic-religious or religio-political groups were gradually being absorbed, under the patronage of the state authority, into a synthesis to be known as the Jama'a, which was supposed to support and in turn was supported by the 'Abbasid caliphate.

In this setting the strategic task of the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq was to save the basic ideal of Shi'ism from absorption by the emerging synthesis on the one hand, and to purify it from extremist and activist tendencies within itself on the other. Thus the circumstances in which the Imamate of Ja'far happened to fall afforded him a unique opportunity, denied to his

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father and grandfather, to firmly establish and explain the principles of legitimacy. The rudiments of the concept and function of the Imam had already been introduced by 'Ali in his speeches, by Hasan in his letters to Mu'awiya and by Husayn in his correspondence with the Shi'ism of Kufa and Basra, which we have discussed in the preceding chapters. After the death of Husayn, the concept of legitimacy within the family of Muhammad and of the function of the Imam restricted to religious and

spiritual guidance of the community were laid down by Zayn al-'Abidin and Muhammad al-Baqir. Now, after the removal of other contenders from the scene Ja'far enjoyed a strategically advantageous position, and it was his task to elucidate the doctrine of the Imamate and elaborate it in a definitive form.

In this attempt Ja'far put the utmost emphasis on two fundamental principles. The first was that of the Nass that is, the Imamate is a prerogative bestowed by God upon a chosen person, from the family of the Prophet, who before his death and with the guidance of God, transfers the Imamate to another by an explicit designation (Nass). On the authority of Nass, therefore, the Imamate is restricted, through all political circumstances, to a definite individual among all the descendants of 'Ali and Fatima, whether he claims the temporal rule for himself or not. Naturally, the transfer of the Imamate through Nass would be both incomplete and meaningless unless it could be traced back to the person

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of 'Ali, who should have been entrusted with the office of the Imamate by the Prophet himself.

The Nass thus initiated by the Prophet came down from 'Ali to Hasan, from Hasan to Husayn, and then remained strictly in the line of Husayn until through successive Nass it reached Ja'far. This theory, as we shall see presently, distinguished Ja'far's Imamate from all other claimants, who did not claim a Nass from any preceding Imam. Zayd clearly denied that there was an explicit Nass or designation of 'Ali by Muhammad,(۱) or that there was any designation of the next Imam by the preceding one. Nor did Muhammad an-Nafs az-Zakiya or his brother Ibrahim ever resort to the principle of Nass from any preceding authority. On the contrary, as Ash'ari points out,(۲) the idea of Nass was the key trait of the Rawafid(۳) as opposed to the supporters of Zayd and later on An-Nafs az-Zakiya. Ash'ari's statement is in accordance with the unanimous reports given by the Twelver writers themselves, such as Nawbakhti; Sa'd al- Ash'ari, and Kashshi, of Muhammad al-Baqir's followers,

who upheld him against Zayd as the only legitimist 'Alid authority on the principle of Nass though the doctrine of Nass was not yet fully elaborated in his time. A comparison between the traditions related from Al-Baqir and those from Ja'far would demonstrate that Ja'far became increasingly clear and emphatic in his expositions on the doctrine of the Nass Imamate. As a result, a further comparison between the attitudes of

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۱- See Ibn Hazm's discussion in Friedlander, "The Heterodoxies of the Shi'ites in the Presentation of Ibn Hazm", JAOS, XXVI II ('۹۰۷), p.۷۴

۲- Ash'ari, Maqalat al-Islamiyin, ed. Helmut Ritter (Istanbul, ۱۹۲۹), pp.۱۶-۱۷

۳- A title with which the Sunni heresiographers describe the Twelver Shi'a. For the meaning and use of the term, see Watt, "The Rafidites: A Preliminary Study", Oriens, (XVI (۱۹۶۳

the followers of these two respective Imams discloses a trend towards a clear acceptance of Ja'far as the Imam largely on the principle of Nass This is evident from the action of a group of the Kufan Shi'is who, after the death of Al-Baqir, adhered for some time to Zayd, but soon abandoned him and went over to Ja'far, whom they regarded as the representative of Al-Baqir's claims.(۱)

Hodgson quotes Strothmann's suggestion, "that the story of the Kufan Shi'is abandoning Zayd for Ja'far shows that they already accepted the idea of a line of Imams by inheritance."(۲) The idea of the Nass Imamate, however, became such a common instrument that not only Ja'far, but a number of ghulat (extremist Shi'is of Kufa, who will be discussed later), such as Bayan, Abu Mansur, and Mughira,(۳) claimed inheritance from Al-Baqir and achieved some short-lived success. There are numerous references in our sources to the effect that Ja'far repeatedly condemned those fanatics and warned his followers not to accept their traditions.

The second fundamental principle embodied in the doctrine of the Imamate as

elaborated and emphasized by Ja'far was that of 'Ilm. This means that an Imam is a divinely inspired possessor of a special sum of knowledge of religion, which can only be passed on before his death to the following Imam. In this way the Imam of the time becomes the exclusively authoritative source of knowledge in religious matters, and thus without his guidance no one can keep to the right path.(۴)

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۱- Tabari, II, p. ۱۷۰۰

۲- Hodgson, "How Did the Early Shi'a Become Sectarian ?", JAOS ('۹۵۵), p.۱۰

۳- For such claims made by these ghulat, see Nawbakhti, Firaq, pp. ۲۵, ۳۰, ۳۹, ۵۲-۵۵; Sa'd al-Ash'ari, Maqalat:, pp. ۳۳, ۳۵, ۳۷; Shahrastani, Milal, ۱, pp.۱۷۸, ۱۷۶. Sa'd al-Ash'ari (Maqalat, p.۳۷) writes that Bayan claimed the Imamate as the legatee of Aba Hashim, and not as that of Al-Baqir.

۴- Kulayni, Kafi, I, p. ۲۰۸

This special knowledge includes both the external (zahir) and the esoteric (batin) meanings of the Qur'an.(۱) A close scrutiny of the traditions related from Al-Baqir and then mostly from Ja'far on the subject of the Imamate will show that they rotate around these two principles of Nass and 'Ilm, which are not merely conjoined or added to one another, but are so thoroughly fused into a unitary vision of religious leadership that it is impossible to separate the one from the other. Hence Nass in fact means transmission of that special knowledge of religion which had been exclusively and legitimately restricted to the divinely favoured Imams of the House of the Prophet through 'Ali, and which can only be transferred from one Imam to his successor as the legacy of the chosen family. Thus, for the adherents of Ja'far, his claim was not just that he was an Imam who ought to be a member of the 'Alid family, but that he was the particular individual, from the descent of the Prophet, designated by his father and therefore inherently possessed of all the authority to guide believers in all religious matters.

As we shall see presently in the traditions of Al-Baqir and Ja'far as-Sadiq, this emphasis on the aspect of "special knowledge" having been possessed by the Imams of the House of the Prophet was a natural corollary of and a necessary response to the situation and tendencies of the epoch. This was the time when there was a wide search

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ibid., I, p.۲۶۱ -۱

for Hadith and a vigorous attempt was being made to construct total systems of the pious life in Islam.

These efforts eventually issued in the formulation of a complete system of Shari'a law. It was the time of Malik b. Anas and Abu Hanifa, the Imams of Fiqh who were busy working out their legal systems in their respective centres of Medina and Kufa. Ja'far as-Sadiq, being the descendant of the Prophet and known for his and his family's learning in religious matters, was evidently looked upon by the community in general at least as an Imam of Fiqh, like that of Malik and Abu Hanifa, concerned with working out the proper details of how the pious should solve the various cases of conscience that might arise. So he appears in Sunni traditions to a degree, and even, as has been pointed out earlier, Abu Hanifa is reported to have been his pupil. But, unlike Malik and Abu Hanifa to the Sunni Muslims, to the followers of the House of the Prophet Ja'far had a unique authority in these matters by virtue of his position as Imam by Nass; that is, to the Shi'a his was the final decision on earth in these matters, whereas the others, as was indeed admitted, had no more legal authority in principle than any of their followers.(۱)

"This claim was perhaps initially less a matter of the knowledge he had (from his father) than of the authoritative use he could make of it, or in

Hodgson, op. cit., p.۱۱ -۱

other words, his hereditary authority to decide cases. Any sovereign must be empowered to make the final decisions in any legal matter; hence the Imam's very claim that sovereignty was justly his could readily entail a claim to final authority in legal, and in this case all religious, matters. Such a claim would be readily transmuted to one of supernatural knowledge in many minds. But in an Imam where the authority was not in actual fact the sovereign, and his 'Ilm remained on a theoretical level, that discernment, that 'Ilm which should guide his decisions, took on a special sacredness and became a unique gift inherited from Imam to Imam. Accordingly, as the exclusively authorized source of the knowledge of how to lead a pious life, the Imam had an all-important function whether he was a ruler or not."(۱)

With the Imamate thus based on Nass and 'Ilm, as explained by Ja'far, it should no longer be difficult for us to understand why Ja'far himself remained absolutely indifferent in all those struggles for power which took place in his lifetime. In his doctrine of the Imamate it was not at all necessary for a divinely appointed Imam to rise in rebellion and try to become a ruler. To him his place was above that of a ruler, who should only carry out what an Imam decides as a supreme authority of religion. It was on this basis that when Zayd came out with his claims, Ja'far raised no protest and even

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ibid. -۱

exalted Zayd's virtues before a delegation of Kufan Shi'is. But at the same time he said to Fudayl b. Rassan that had Zayd become a king, he would not have known how to act and fulfil his duties.(۱) In this way he implied that Zayd had the right to political authority only. He made similar remarks when Muhammad an-Nafs az-Zakiya rose to claim the Imamate. Ja'far emphatically denied any share in the religious leadership of

the community for the descendants of Hasan,(۲) from whom Husayn inherited the .Imamate, which then remained in the latter's progeny

According to the traditions related in this connection, Al-Baqir designated Ja'far as his successor in many ways. He called him "the best of all mankind in his time", and "the one in charge of the family of Muhammad" (Qa'im Al Muhammad), and also trusted him with the books and scrolls and the weapons of the Prophet, which were in his possession.(۳) These scriptures containing special knowledge of religion and the weapons of the Prophet must only come into the possession of the true Imam, who is .designated by Nass by the previous Imam

Thus by declaring that they were in his trust, Ja'far denied the rights of An-Nafs az-Zakiya, who asserted that he had the sword of the Prophet.(۴) Whether these family treasures were in the custody of Ja'far or were in the possession of the Hasanid claimants, the fact remains that Ja'far himself claimed the spiritual leadership of the community which he based on the

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Kashshi, Rijal, p.۲۸۵ -۱

Kulayni, Kafi, I, p.۲۷۴ -۲

Kulayni, Kafi, I, p.۳۵۶ -۳

ibid., pp.۲۶۵ f.; Kashshi, Rijal p.۴۲۷ -۴

same principles as Al-Baqir, namely on Nass. Ja'far explained that the Imamate is bequeathed from father to son, but not necessarily to the eldest son, for "as Daniel selected Solomon from among his progeny," so an Imam designates as his successor the son he considers really worthy of the office. Thus Ja'far could annul the appointment of his eldest son Isma'il, who died before him, pass over the candidature (of his next son, Abd Allah, and nominate the third, Musa al-Kazim.(۱

In explaining the position of the Imam, Ja'far made repeated declarations in unequivocal terms and proclaimed that the Imamate is a covenant between God and mankind, and recognition of the Imam is the absolute duty of every believer.(۲) “Whoever dies without having known and acknowledged the Imam of his time dies as an infideL”(۳) The Imams are the proofs (Hujja) of God on earth, their words are the words of God, and their commands are the commands of God. Obedience to them is obedience to God, and disobedience to them is disobedience to God. In all their decisions they are inspired by God, and they are in absolute authority. It is to them, therefore, that “God has ordained obedience”(۴) (Qur'an Iv, ۵۹).

Ja'far goes on to declare that the Imam of the time is the witness for the people and he is the gate to God (Bab Allah) and the road (Sabil) to Him, and the guide thereto (Dalil), and the repository of His knowledge, and the interpreter of His revelations.

۱- Kulayni, Kafi, I, p.۳۱۸

۲- Kulayni, Kafi

۳- ibid., p.۴۶۲

۴- ibid., Pp.۲۱۴-۲۲۰

The Imam of his time is a pillar of God's unity (tawhid). The Imam is immune from sin (khata) and error (dalal). The Imams are those from whom “God has removed all impurity and made them absolutely pure” (Qur'an, XXXIII, ۳۳); they are possessed of the power of miracles and of irrefutable arguments (dalil); and they are for the protection of the people of this earth just as the stars are for the inhabitants of the heavens. They may be likened, in this community, to the Ark of Noah: he who boards itobtains salvation and reaches the gate of repentance.(۱)

In another tradition, “God delegated to the Imams spiritual rulership over the whole world, which must always have such a leader and guide. Even if only two men were left upon the face of the earth, one of them would be an Imam, so much would his

guidance be needed."(۲) In fact, according to the Imam Ja'far's explanation, there are always two Imams, the actual or "speaking" Imam (Natiq) and his son-successor, who during the lifetime of his father is "silent" (samit).(۳) The silent Imam does not know of his exalted position until his father's death, for only then is he entrusted with the scriptures and the secrets of religion. When the father expires, his son immediately steps into his place and becomes the "proof" (al-Hujja) for mankind.(۴)

As has been pointed out earlier, in order to prove his rights to the Imamate on the principle of Nass it was only

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۱- See Kulayni, Kafi, I, pp.۲۰۷ ff.; Saduq, Risalat al-Itiqadat, trans. A. A. A. Fyzee, A Shi'ite Creed (London ۱۹۴۲), p.۹۶

۲- Kulayni, Kafi, I, pp.۲۰۵, ۲۰۷, ۳۰۴ f.

۳- ibid,, p.۲۰۵

۴- ibid.

logical that the utmost emphasis should be put first of all on 'Ali rights to the spiritual leadership of the community as the divinely favoured legatee of the Prophet. It was not a new thing, however. 'Ali himself had put forward his claim time and again after the death of the Prophet until his own assassination ;and thereafter Hasan, Husayn, Zayn al-'Abidin, and Muhammad al-Baqir never missed an opportunity to pronounce 'Ali's rights and superiority to the heritage of the Prophet. Ja'far, enjoying better circumstances than his predecessors, only elucidated and systematized concepts and ideals they had already introduced in rudimentary form. Thus he, as indeed did his father before him, quoted many verses of the Qur'an which in his interpretation proved the appointment of 'Ali to the Imamate. The numerous verses quoted in this connection by the Shi'i sources(۱) are among those which are accepted by all Muslims as the 'Ayn al Mutashabihat: unclear verses which require interpretation (ta'wil), as opposed to the Ayat al-Muhkamat: clear or firm verses in which there is no room for

:any interpretation. In the Qur'an we read

God, it is He Who has sent down to you the Book. Some of its verses are perspicuous“ (muhkamat), these are the basis of the Book: others are unclear (Mutashabihat)... No one knows their interpretation except God, and those who are firm in their knowledge (say, 'We believe therein, it is all from our Lord.”(۲

It was at the time of Ja'far that such verses were being interpreted

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See Kulayni, Kafi; “Kitab al-Hujja”, passim; Mufid, Irshad, I, Pp.۳۰۴-۱۳ -۱
Qur'an, ۱۱۱, ۶ -۲

by the religious leaders of the community. Ja'far, by virtue of his birth and family ;background, perhaps had better claims to explain the Qur'an than the other Muslims

and it was, therefore, quite natural for a section of the community adhering to the family of the Prophet to give more weight to Ja'far's interpretations than to those who .only acquired knowledge through scholarship

Like Nass, the “special knowledge” of religion ('Ilm) which Ja'far declared for himself should also be traced back to 'Ali, from whom it passed from Imam to Imam until it came into Ja'far's possession. Thus Ja'far said that the Prophet entrusted 'Ali with the greatest name of God and the traditions pertaining to the knowledge of prophethood (Athar an-Nubuwwa).(۱) This is only one of numerous traditions recorded by the Shi'i sources regarding the extraordinary knowledge with which 'Ali distinguished himself among all those around the Prophet. There must, however, have been some

substance to the fame and widespread reputation of the unparalleled knowledge of 'Ali; not only the Shi'i sources and Ja'far's traditions, but most of the Sunni sources and their standard collections of Hadith, have recorded a number of traditions in regard to ('Ali's superior knowledge.(۲

As has been pointed out earlier, the Caliph 'Umar is frequently quoted as saying that "'Ali is the best of all the judges of the people of Medina and the chief of the readers of the Qur'an."(۳) Perhaps the most representative tradition of 'Ali's erudite knowledge, recorded even by most of the

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۱- Kulayni, Kafi, I, p.۲۶۲

۲- See Wensinck, Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition (Leiden ۱۹۶۰), under the heading "'Ali"

۳- Ibn Sa'd, II, p. lox

Sunni sources, is one which has the Prophet saying: "I am the city of knowledge ('Ilm), and 'Ali is its door."(۱) With the overwhelming testimony coming down to us from both Sunni and Shi'I sources, there seems to be little doubt that 'Ali was acknowledged as having extraordinary knowledge in religious matters. Inheritance of this knowledge thus became a source of the claim of special rights for the legitimist Imams of the House.

Another very relevant and rather difficult problem connected with Ja'far's claims to the Nass and inheritance of "special knowledge" was the question of the scope and applicability of the term Ahl al-Bayt. On the one hand, all the descendants of 'Ali, whether through Fatima or not, were claiming membership of the "Sacred House". On the other hand, the 'Abbasids, being the descendants of Hashim, also claimed the prerogative of the Ahl al-Bayt and were revered by their followers as God's inspired Imams and as the Mahdi.

Ja'far thus put his utmost emphasis on a tradition from the Prophet which would limit the inclusive meaning of the Qur'anic verse referring to the people of the House "from whom [all kinds of] uncleanliness were removed" to 'Ali, Fatima, and their progeny. This tradition is known as the Hadith al-Kisa or as the Hadith Ashab al-Kisa. The Hadith runs: "Muhammad made 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn enter under his mantle (kisa) in the house of Umm Salima and then said: 'Every Prophet has his family (ahl) and his charge (thaql); these, O

۱- ibid.

God, are my family and my charge.' Hearing this, Umm Salima asked: 'Am I not from the people of your House?' The Prophet replied: 'No, may you be well; only these under the mantle are the people of my House and my charge."'(۱)

The tradition is a long one. But perhaps the most important part of it is when the archangel Gabriel came down to announce the "Verse of the Purification"(۲) for the "Five of the Mantle",(۳) and Muhammad introduced them to the angel saying: "There are, under the mantle, Fatima, her husband 'Ali, and her two children Hasan and Husayn."

One can see clearly that the point of gravity is laid here not on 'Ali, but on Fatima, with reference to whom 'Ali, Hasan, and Husayn are introduced. Pre-Islamic literature is not devoid of examples where people are introduced through their mothers or wives. In the case of Fatima, we have seen in the previous chapter that An-Nafs az-Zakiya in his letter to Mansur made special reference to his relationship to Fatima. The reference to her was also made essential even by the Zaydis, who restricted the Imamate to only those 'Alids who were Fatimids. But it was Ja'far who in his elaborations put extreme emphasis on this point. It had indeed an immense potential appeal for the claims of the legitimist Imams. Eventually Fatima came to be regarded, especially among the Twelver Shi'is, as one of the most respected figures.

Through such traditions, Ja'far in his own lifetime established for

p: ۴۰۳

.Kulayni, Kafi, I, pp.۳۳۰ f -۱
And God only wishes to remove from you [all kinds of] uncleanliness, O Ahl al-Bay:" -۲
".[of Muhammad], and thoroughly purify you
See Tha'labi, Tafsir, p.۴۰۲ -۳

his line of Imams the sanctity of the Ahl al- Bayt as an inherited quality confined only to those of the children of Fatima who were ordained to be the Imams, and in this way .rejected the claims of all other Hashimites, whether 'Alids or 'Abbasids

Such an hereditary claim to the Imamate based on Nass and "special knowledge", as elaborated by Ja'far and his father Al-Baqir, however, greatly exposed the claimants to the danger of persecution by the 'Abbasids, who also claimed spiritual leadership of the community. Thus arose the famous doctrine of Taqiya (dissimulation) on which Ja'far put the utmost emphasis, raising it almost to the status of a condition for Faith. It is interesting to note that there is not a single tradition on Taqiya from any Imam prior to Al-Baqir, which is a sufficient proof that the doctrine of Taqiya was first introduced by him and was further elaborated by Ja'far, and that it was, in fact, a need of the time and the circumstances in which they were living and working out the tenets for their followers. One may see that the theory of Taqiya suits very well the theory of extraordinary knowledge embodied in the Imams, which should be limited to a few selected persons who inherited that knowledge through Nass. Thus Ja'far :said

This affair (amr) [the Imamate and the esoteric meaning of religion] is occult (mastur)"

and veiled (muqanna) by a covenant (mithaq), and whoever unveils it will be disgraced (by God."(1)

In a conversation

Kulayni; Kafi, II, p.۴۸۸ -۱

with Mu'alla b. Khunays, one of the extremists of Kufa whom Ja'far discredited, the :Imam said

Keep our affair secret, and do not divulge it publicly, for whoever keeps it secret and" does not reveal it, God will exalt him in this world and put light between his eyes in the next, leading him to Paradise. O Mu'alla, whoever divulges our affair publicly, and does not keep it secret, God will disgrace him in this world and will take away light from between his eyes in the next, and will decree for him darkness that will lead him to the Fire. O Mu'alla, verily the Taqiya is of my religion and of the religion of my father, and one who does not keep the Taqiya has no religion. O Mu'alla, it is necessary to worship in secret as it is necessary to worship openly. O Mu'alla, the one (who reveals our affairs is the one who denies them."(1)

The esoteric mysteries of religion were Wilayat Allah, which God entrusted to Gabriel, who brought them to Muhammad. The Prophet, in turn, handed them over to 'Ali, and they became the inheritance of the Imams, who are bound to keep them secret.(2) The duty, therefore, incumbent on the Faithful is that they should not impart their faith to those who do not share the same beliefs. Ja'far thus accused the Kaysanites of betraying religion when they spread its secrets among the common people: "Our secret continued to be preserved until it came into the

.ibid -۱

ibid., p.۴۸۷ -۲

hands of the sons of Kaysan (wuld Kaysan) [his followers] and they spoke of it on the roads and in the villages of the Sawad."(۱)

A careful examination of the development of the concept and doctrine of the Taqiya would clearly reveal the fact that it was a natural corollary of the prevalent circumstances of the time and an inevitable necessity imposed by the danger of following certain religious or political views. To announce publicly that certain persons were divinely inspired Imams and therefore the sole object of obedience was a direct challenge to the authority of the 'Abbasid caliphs, who claimed to have combined in themselves both the temporal and religious sovereignty. Shi'ism thus had to find its own means to preserve itself in that difficult situation.

This was accomplished through the introduction of the doctrine of dissimulation, but this, according to the pattern of the epoch, where the entire pattern of life was considered from a religious standpoint, must be supported by certain passages from the Qur'an or a Hadith indicating a precedent. According to Ja'far, both Joseph and Abraham practised Taqiya when they resorted to concealment of the truth: the first when he accused his brother of theft, and the second when he asserted that he was ill.(۲) Muhammad himself, accordingly, is reported to have practised Taqiya until the verse in which he was ordered to preach publicly was revealed. It reads: "O you Apostle, reveal the whole that has been revealed to you from your Lord; if

ibid., p. ۴۸۶ -۱

Kulayni, Kafi, I, p.۴۸۳ -۲

you do it not, you have not preached His message and God will not defend you from

wicked men."(١) Another verse which was used to support the doctrine of Taqiya :reads

And who disbelieves in God after believing in Him, except under compulsion, and" (whose heart is confident in faith "(٢

In Al-Baqir's period the doctrine of Taqiya was established in Shi'ism, and we may attribute the rudiments of its theory to him. But it was left to Ja'far to give it final form and make it an absolute condition of true faith: "Fear for your religion and protect it [lit. veil it] with the Taqiya, for there is no faith (Iman) in whom there is no Taqiya." (٣) Goldhizer traces the history of the doctrine of Taqiya and finds it practised without being announced as a principle even by Muhammad b. al- Hanafiya, though in his findings, too, it was Ja'far who so elaborated Taqiya as one of the doctrines of Shi'i (faith out of the political needs of his time.(۴

It is, however, hardly disputable that the doctrine of Taqiya, thus made a necessary part of faith by Ja'far, ultimately served the Shi'is as a very useful instrument in the preservation of their doctrinal discipline during all unfavourable and rather hostile political circumstances. This is also evident from another tradition from Ja'far quoted by Saduq in his Creed, where the Imam says: "Mix with the people [i.e., enemies] outwardly, but oppose them inwardly so long as the Amirate is a matter of

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Qur'an, V, ۶٧ -١

Qur'an, XVI, ١٠۶ -٢

Kulayni, Kafi; I, p. ۴٨٣ -٣

Das Prinzip der Takija im Islam" , ZDMG, LX (١٩٩۶), pp.٢١٣-٢٠" -۴

opinion."(١) On another occasion, when Zakariya b. Sabiq enumerated the Imams in

the presence of Ja'far and reached Muhammad al-Baqir, he was interrupted by Ja'far's exclamation: "That is enough for you. God has affirmed your tongue and has guided your heart."(٢) We may conclude from all these traditions that the real meaning of Taqiya is not telling a lie or falsehood, as it is often understood, but the protection of the true religion and its followers from enemies through concealment in .circumstances where there is fear of being killed or captured or insulted

There is another important point which must be discussed here briefly. A considerable number of traditions are to be found, especially in the earliest Shi'i collection of hadith, Al- Kafi, which describe the Imams as supernatural human beings. What was the origin of these traditions, and to what extent are the Imams themselves responsible for them? These traditions are reported, as indeed are all Shi'i traditions, on the authority of one of the Imams, in this case mainly from Al-Baqir and Ja'far. But were these Imams really the authors of such traditions, which describe their supernatural ?character

The first thing which must be noted in this connection is that while Al-Baqir and Ja'far themselves lived in Medina, most of their followers lived in Kufa. This fact brings us to a crucial problem. Kufa had long been a centre of ghulat speculations and activities. Whether 'Abd Allah b. Saba',(٣) to whom the history of the ghulat is traced, was

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Saduq, Creed, p.۱۱۰ -۱

Kashshi; Rijal p.۴۱۹ -۲

'"See E۱۲ article "'Abd Allah b. Saba -۳

a real personality or not, the name As-Saba'iya(١) is often used to describe the ghulat in Kufa who believed in the supernatural character of 'Ali. According to the heresiographers, Ibn Saba was the first to preach the doctrine of waqf (refusal to recognize the death of 'Ali) and the first to condemn the first two caliphs in addition to 'Uthmin.(٢) Baghdadi says that As-Saba'iya mostly consisted of the old Saba'iyans of

South Arabia, who survived all vicissitudes until the time of Mukhtar and formed the nucleus of his "chair-worshippers".(٣)

This early group of ghulat seems to have been absorbed by the Kaysaniya, who believed in Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya's Mahdism and followed his son Abu Hashim 'Abd Allah. The death of Abu Hashim was the turning point in the history of the ghulat, for it caused the split in consequence of which they separated into two distinct groups. One upheld the various successors of Abu Hashim and believed in his concealment and return and eventually transplanted themselves into Iran, where they grew into the Kharramite revolutionary movement towards the end of the Umayyad period. The other group overlapped the Kaysanite stage, remained in Kufa, and somehow connected itself with the Husaynid Imams.

The most conspicuous names in this second group, who became the followers of Al-Baqir and then of Ja'far as-Sadiq, are Hamza b. 'Umara al-Buraydi, Bayan b. Sim'an, Sa'd an-Nahdi, Mughira b. Sa'id al-'Ijli, his Co-tribesman Abu Mansur al-'Ijli, and Muhammad b. Abi Zaynab Miqlas b. Abi'l-Khattab. It would be too

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۱- Sa'd al-Ash'ari; Maqalat, p.۲۰; Nawbakhti, Firaq, p.۲۲

۲- Sa'd al-Ash'ari, loc. cit.; Nawbakhti; loc. cit.

۳- Farq, p.۳۲

lengthy to even briefly describe their extremist teachings here; suffice it to say that they preached that the Imams were the incarnations of God, that the divine particle incarnate in 'All b. Abi Talib enabled him to know the unseen, foretell the future, and to fight against the infidels, that the power of the invisible angelic world was in 'Ali like a lamp within a niche in a wall, and that God's light was in 'Ali as the flame in a lamp.(١) In connection with these ghulat and their teachings, here we will only point out that from Al-Baqir onwards, all the subsequent Imams always cursed them and repeatedly warned their followers not to accept traditions from them.(٢)

Kashshi quotes Ja'far, who complains of Mughira, for example, as misrepresenting Al-Baqir, and adds that all the ghuluw ascribed to Al- Baqir was from Mughira.(۳) In fact Ja'far and all the Imams who followed him were always unequivocal in violently cursing the ghulat and condemning their teachings.

There was, however, another very active group in Kufa, busy in advancing the cause of Al-Baqir and Ja'far. The most important among them were people such as Jabir b. Yazid al-Ju'fi,(۴) Abu Hamza ath-Thumali;(۵) and Mu'adh b. Farra an-Nahwi.(۶) Paying only occasional visits to the Imams In Medina and enjoying their confidence, they severed their relations with the ghulat of Kufa. On behalf of the Imams they had doctrinal quarrels with the ghulat and preached against the latter's excessive claims regarding the nature and function of

p: ۴۱۰

۱- Kashshi, Rijal, p. ۲۹۶; Shahrastani, Milal, I, p. ۱۵۲; Ash'ari, Maqalat, pp. ۶-۹

۲- See Kashshi, Rijal ۴۴ p. ۱۴۸, passim; Nawbakhti, Firaq, p.۳۴

۳- Kashshi; Rijal, p.۲۲۳

۴- See Sam'ani, Ansab, p. ۱۱۳b; Kashshi, Rijal, pp. ۱۹۱ ff.; Najashi, Rijal pp.۹۳ f.

۵- See Chapter ۹

۶- Ha'iri; Muntaha, pp.۲۰۲ f.; Ibn Nadim, Fihrist, p.۶۶

the Imams. They did remain faithful to a certain doctrinal discipline, imposed by the Imams, while this was aggressively violated by the ghulat. Yet, when we see the traditions related by Jabir and his associates in this group, it seems that they must have been influenced by some of the ideas propagated by the ghulat, especially those of Bayan b. Sim'an and Mughira b. Sa'id.

Perhaps no follower of Al-Baqir and Ja'far dared to go so far in his assertions as Jabir. It will suffice to quote here only one from a great number of traditions related by

:Jabir, which indicates his semi-ghulat tendencies. Jabir related that Al- Baqir said

O Jabir, the first beings that God created were Muhammad and his family, the rightly'" guided ones and the guides; they were the phantoms of light before God.' I asked, 'And what were the phantoms?' Al-Baqir said, 'Shadows of light, luminous bodies without spirits; they were strengthened by the Holy Spirit (Ruh al-Quds), through which Muhammad and his family worshipped God. For that reason He created them forbearing, learned, endowed with filial piety, and pure; they worship God through prayer, fasting, prostrating themselves, enumerating His names, and ejaculating: God (is great."'(۱)

If we compare the ideas of the ghulat concerning God's light in 'Ali, pointed out above, with Jabir's description of the Imams as the "shadows of light" and "luminous bodies", .there seems to be a common trend of thinking between the two

It is perhaps for this reason that later ghulat groups accepted

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۱- Kafi, I, p.۲۷۹

Jabir as their forerunner. This is indicated by the assertions of Abu'l-Khattab and his successors, who claimed Jabir as their predecessor. Thus Umm at-Kitab is said to contain the teachings of Al-Baqir, Jabir b. 'Abd Allah al-Ansari, and Jabir al-Ju'fl.(۱) Another religious writing, Risalat al-Ju'fi, containing Isma'ili doctrines, is based mainly on the expositions of Jabir on the authority of Al- Baqir.(۲) Apparently neither the doctrine of Umm al-Kitab nor that of Risalat al-Ju'fi represent the views of Al-Baqir, and probably only little of what Jabir himself taught. It is nevertheless an important .point that he was regarded as the spiritual forefather of the post-Khattabite ghulat

However, in spite of the fact that ghuluw was repeatedly condemned by Al-Baqir, Jafar, and the successive Imams of the Husaynid line, a number of traditions containing some ghulat ideas found their way into Shi'i collections of hadith. Most of these traditions are related from Jabir al-Ju'fi But it is now by no means possible to ascertain whether Jabir himself was the author of these traditions or whether these were attached to his name by the later ghulat and were circulated in the Imamate circles. In both the Sunni and the Shi'i science of hadith, little attention was paid to the substance of a tradition: usually a hadith was either accepted or rejected according to the credibility and trustworthiness of its transmitters. In the Shi'i science of hadith, the main criterion was that if a person was proven to have been a devoted and sincere

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۱- See Ivanow, "Notes sur Umm al-Kitab", REI, ۱۹۳۲

۲- See E. E. Salisbury, "Translation of an Unpublished Arabic Risala", YAOS, ۱۸۵۳, pp. ۳-۱۶۷

adherent of the Imam of his time, his traditions were acceptable. Jabir, in spite of his semi-ghulat tendencies and exaggerations, whether authentic or forged, nevertheless remained, throughout his life, faithful to Al-Baqir and Ja'far. When Muhammad b. Ya'qub al-Kulayni (died ۳۲۸/۹۳۹) compiled the first collection of the Shi'I traditions, Al-Kafi fi'l-'Ilm ad-Din, his purpose was to collect whatever came to him on the authority of those who were known as the adherents of any one of the Imams. In this way a great many traditions ascribing supernatural and super human characteristics to the Imams, propounded by the semi-ghulat circles in Ku fa, crept into the Shi'i literature.

There are, however, numerous traditions in Kafi in which both Al-Baqir and Ja'far clearly denied that they possessed supernatural powers and discounted the miracles attributed to them.(۱) It is thus most unlikely that Ja'far was personally responsible for

all those fantastic descriptions of the super-natural character of the Imams which were circulated in his name by his semi-ghulat followers in Kufa. Indeed, Ja'far did not excommunicate them as he did, for example, in the case of Abu'l-Khattab, and as Al-Baqir did in the cases of Bayan, Abu Mansur, and Mughira. In Kafi itself, there are many traditions from both Al-Baqir and Ja'far as-Sadiq in which they declared that they were simply God-fearing men, distinguished from others only because they were the Prophet's nearest relatives and thus became the custodians and trustees of his message. And by virtue of their devotion to God and because

p: ۴۱۳

.e.g., Kafi, pp. ۳۶۵ ff.; Kashshi, Rijal pp. ۳۲۴ f -۱

of the fact that perfect knowledge of God had come to them through Nass and 'Ilm, they were able to live their lives in complete obedience to the will of God.(۱) Regarding the traditions pertaining to the supernatural character of the Imams, perhaps the :most decisive and revealing is the statement of Ja'far himself in which he said

Whatever is in agreement with the Book of God, accept it; and whatever is contrary" to it, reject it."(۲) When we recall that Ja'far as-Sadiq was at least a century before the time of Bukhari and Muslim, it is significant to find that it is the Imam Ja'far who is credited with establishing this criterion for testing hadith, one which came to be (regarded as the most important principle to observe in judging traditions.(۳

Moreover, the fact that the ghulat or semi-ghulat were attributing their own thoughts to the Imams and that the Imams were not responsible for these statements is further illustrated by a report given by Kashshi. A follower of the Imam 'Ali ar-Rida once read before him certain Hadith which he had copied from the notebooks of those in Iraq who had taken down sayings of Al-Baqir and Ja'far. The Imam strongly rejected the authenticity of those traditions and declared that Abu'l-Khattab and his followers had contrived to have their lies accepted in those notebooks.(۴) Similar traditions have been noted earlier wherein Ja'far complained of Mughira

.misrepresenting Al-Baqir

We have so far been discussing the extremists and semi-extremists of Ja'far's circle and

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۱- e.g., Kafi, I, p.۳۰۸, passim

۲- Ya'qubi, II, p.۳۸۱; Kashshi, Rijal, p.۲۲۴

۳- See Donaldson, The Shi'ite Religion, p.۱۳۵

۴- Kashshi, Rijal, p. ۲۲۴ See Hodgson, op. cit., p.۱۳

their excessive claims for the persons of the Imams. Not all of Ja'far's followers were fanatics, however. A considerable number of them were simply Shi'ism distinguished from the other Muslims only by the higher degree of their devotion to the memory of 'Ali and by their conviction that he was the best person after the Prophet for the combined office of the spiritual and temporal leadership of the community. Thus they considered the Imamate as the right of 'Ali and his descendants, ordained to them by God. The beat example of these forerunners of the Shi'is, later to become the Twelvers, is 'Abd Allah b. Abi Ya'fur, a resident of Kufa. He opposed his fellow Kufans, such as Mu'alla b. Khunays, who asserted that the Imams were prophets. Ibn Abi Ya'fur objected to this and said that they were only pure, God-fearing, learned theologians entrusted with guiding the community on the path of God.(۱) Very strict in his religious practices, he was highly favoured and respected by Ja'far.(۲) He enjoyed the respect of the moderate traditionists' circles, and when he died during the lifetime of Ja'far, many of the Ahl al-Hadith and pro-Shi'I Murijtes accompanied his bier.(۳)

There was still another group among the followers of Ja'far, busy in the intellectual or dialectical questions of the day, along the lines of the Mu'tazila. It is indicative of Ja'far's leadership that he gathered around himself the men who could stand with

remarkable vigour among those of the Muslim scholars who were speculating

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Kashshi, Rijal, p.۲۴۷ -۱

.ibid -۲

.ibid -۳

on the philosophical problems of the time. This group of the first Shi'i speculative theologians, to be discussed presently, who provided the intellectual element in the Imamate of Ja'far, stand out from the Shi'i extremists even in the hostile presentations of some of the heresiographers. Ash'ari takes much interest in them and clearly distinguishes them from the extremists or semi-extremists among the Shi'is of Ja'far's following. It may also be noted here in passing that a close study of the heresiographical works, such as those of Ash'ari and Baghdadi, enable us to discern the cross-currents and intermingling of ideas between the Shi'i and Sunni schools of thought at their evolutionary stages. However, the attachment of this group to the Imam marked a great advance in the development of Shi'ism in its own right. These speculative theologians of Ja'far's circle were later regarded as the elite of the Shi'i mutakallimun, though before the science of kalam became a definite branch of learning the early Shi'i mutakallimun, who formed the backbone of the future Twelver Shi'a, were speculative theologians, traditionists, and jurists all at the .same time

In this group, mention should first be made of Abu'l-Hasan b. A'yan b. Susan, better known by his kunya, Az-Zurara. He was a mawla of the Banu Shayban of Kufa, and the grandson of an enslaved Greek monk who adopted Islam.(۱) Zurara originally belonged to the supporters of Zayd b. 'Ali, for together with his brother Humran b. A'yan and At-Tayyar, great Mu'tazilite leader. This itself

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Tusi; Fihrist, pp.۱۴۱ ff.; Ha'iri, Muntaha, pp. ۱۳۵; Hill'; Rijal p.۷۶ -۱

suggests that under Mu'tazilite influence Zurara developed his interest in speculative theology. Zurara and his two brothers later changed their allegiance and attached themselves to Al-Baqir, Humran being the first to take this step.(۱)

After the death of Al-Baqir, Zurara belonged to the circle of the closest adherents of Ja'far as-Sadiq, who spoke Of him with great appreciation: "Four men are the best beloved by me, whether alive or dead: Burayd b. Mu'awiya al-'Ijli, Zurara, Muhammad b. Muslim, and Al-Ahwal".(۲) Ibn Abi 'Umayr(۳) said that he and his contemporaries were beside Zurara "like children around their teacher".(۴) It seems that because of his vehement activities in the cause of Ja'far, Zurara met with some difficulties and even dangers. Thus, to spare him hardships, Ja'far, resorting to the principle of Taqiya, apparently disavowed him and even cursed him. Justifying this, he said that in order to save Zurara, he had acted in the same way as the Prophet Khidr, when he sank a ship to save it from being taken from its owners by a tyrannous king.(۵)

Zurara, who only occasionally paid visits to Ja'far in Medina or met him in Mecca, lived in Kufa and there had a large circle of disciples. Though Zurara was also regarded as a traditionist, a lawyer, and a theologian, he attained his great renown in the fields of the science of tradition and in kalam. In fact, he was the founder of the Shi'i school of speculative theology in the proper sense, and the first teacher

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Ha'iri; Muntaha, p.۱۲۰ -۱

Kashshi, Rijal, p.۱۳۵; Tusi, Fihrist, p.۱۴۶; Ha'iri, Muntaha, p.۱۳۶ -۲

Abu Ahmad Muhammad b. Abi 'Umayr Ziyad b. 'Isa, a traditionist and companion of -۳ Musa al-Kazim and 'Ali ar-Rida, who is said to have written four books. See Najashi, p.۲۲۸; Ha'iri, Muntaha, p.۲۵۴

Kashshi, Rija۱, p.۱۳۵ -۴

Kashshi; Rijal, p.۱۳۸. For the reference to Khidr, see Qur'an, XVIII, ۷۱ -۵

.of kalam(۱) from within the circle of Ja'far

Among Zurara's pupils, who were all devoted followers of Ja'far, were his own sons Hasan,(۲) Husayn,(۳) and 'Ubayd Allah ;(۴) his brother Hurman, the grammarian and one of the foremost companions of Al-Baqir ;(۵) Hamza, the son of Hurman;(۶) Bukayr b. A'yun(۷) and his son 'Abd Allah;(۸) Muhammad b. al-Hakam ;(۹) Humayd b. Rabbah;(۱۰) Muhammad b. an-Nu'man al-Ahwal, and Hisham b. Salim al- Jawaliqi.(۱۱) The circle of Zurara was usually known as Az-Zurariya or At- Tamimiya, (۱۲) and its intellectual activities in the field of scholastic theology greatly strengthened the cause (of Ja'far and later that of Musa al-Kazim.(۱۳

Together with other theological and scholastic problems, Zurara and his disciples evolved the theory that the knowledge of God is an obligation on every believer and cannot be attained without an Imam designated by God, and thus complete obedience to the Imam is a religious duty. The Imams by necessity are endowed with special knowledge. Therefore, what other men can attain by discursive reason (nazar), an Imam always knows owing to his special knowledge and his superior and unequalled power of reasoning. Zurara and his circle promulgated their views on almost every question of what we now call scholastic philosophy, such as the attributes of God, His Essence and His Actions, His Intention or Will, and the human capacity.(۱۴) The impression we get of Zurara from the sources, especially from Kashshi, is that he played a very important role in the development of legitimist Shi'i thought

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Ibn Nadim, Fihrist, p. ۲۲۰; Ha'iri, Muntaha, p.۱۳۶ -۱

.Ha'iri, Muntaha, p.۹۳; Ibn Nadim, Ioc. cit -۲

.Ha'iri, Muntaha, p.۱۱۰; Ibn Nadim, loc. cit -۳

Ha'iri, Muntahۀ, p.۹۹; Ibn Nadim, loc. cit.; Tusi; Fihrist, p.۲۰۲, referring to him as - ۴ 'Ubayd b. Zurara

Ibn Nadim, loc. cit.; Kashshi, Rijal, p.۱۷۶ -۵

Ha'iri, Muntaha, p.۱۳۱; Tusi, Fihrist, p. "۷ -۶

.Kashshi, Rijal, p. ۱۸ I; Ha'iri, Muntahۀ, p.۶۸; Ibn Nadim, loc. cit -۷

.Tusi, Fihrist, p. ۱۸۸; Ha'iri, Muntaha, p. ۱۸۲; Ibn Nadim, loc. cit -۸

A brother of Hisham b. al-Hakam; see Ha'iri, Muntaha, p.۲۷۱ -۹

Ash'ari, Maqalat, I, p. ۴۳ -۱۰

For the last two, see below, pp.۳۰۷-۸ -۱۱

Ash'ari, Maqalat, I, p.۲۸, referring to At-Tamimiya -۱۲

See a detailed account of the activities of Zurara and his circle in Kashshi, Rijal pp. -۱۳ ۱۳۳-۶۱

Detailed accounts can be found in Ash'ari, Maqalat, II, pp.۳۶ f.; Baghdadi, Farq, - ۱۴ p.۴۳; Shahrastani; Milal, I, p. ۱۸۶

and contributed a great deal to the formation of the Imamate creed. He is one of the .most frequently quoted authorities in all the major books of the Shi'is

Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Nu'man al-Ahwal was another striking personality among the speculative theologians of Kufa who linked the question of the Imamate with other fundamental scholastic problems. His circle is described by the heresiographers as An-Nu'maniya, and he distinguished himself among all the adherents of Ja'far for his excellence in dialectics and learning in theology, as well as for the piquancy of his answers in disputes with his adversaries. An extremely committed Shi'i, Al-Ahwal was at first one of the most devoted adherents of Al-Baqir, whose claims he defended against Zayd. He later became an equally ardent supporter of Ja'far as-Sadiq and .finally of Musa al-Kazim

The greater part of his intellectual activities in promoting the Shi'i cause was perhaps spent during the Imamate of Ja'far. He is counted among the most prominent companions of Ja'far, and was one of those who accepted Musa al-Kazim as their Imam immediately after the former's death, and without considering the candidature of any other son of Ja'far.(١) He is frequently reported to have held heated debates with the great jurist Abu Hanifa, whom he despised for being a Murjite. Abu Hanifa, on his part, treated him with scorn and contempt.(٢) Al-Ahwal is described as the most courageous and vociferous in his convictions regarding the rights of the legitimist Imams on rational grounds.(٣) As a zealous

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۱ - Kashshi, Rijal, pp. ۱۸۵ ff; Najashi, Rijal, p.۲۲۸; Sa'd al- Ash'ari, Maqalat, p.۸۸; Tusi, Fihrist, p.۲۲۳; Ibn Nadim, Fihrist, p.۱۷۶; Ha'iri, Muntaha, p.۲۹۵; Huh, Rijal p.۱۳۸

۲- Najashi, Rijal p.۲۲۸; Kashshi, Rijal p.۱۸۷

۳- See Kashshi, Rija۱, pp. '۳۵ ff; Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, 'Iqd, II, p.۴۶۵

supporter of the legitimist line, he upheld the dogma of the God-imposed duty of complete obedience to the Imams, and of the supreme knowledge possessed by them, necessary for the guidance of men.

He is said to have been a prolific writer, and a number of his works are mentioned by various authorities. His writings include his Kitab al-Imama, his Kitab ar-Radd 'ala'l-Mu'tazila fi Imamat al-Mafdul, and a number of other treatises, probably of a polemical nature.(١) The titles of the books ascribed to him suggest that the question of the Imamate was one of the main issues between the Mu'tazila and the Shi'i thinkers of that time. Kashshi records a number of controversial debates held by him in support of Ja'far's rights to the Imamate, and also quotes Ja'far as saying: "Al-Ahwal is most beloved by me, whether alive or dead."(٢)

Another foremost supporter of Ja'far in this circle was Hisham b. Salim al-Jawaliqi, who was brought up in his childhood as a slave from Jurjan, and became a mawla of

Bishr b. Marwan. He also lived in Kufa, earning his living as a seller of fodder ('allaf). Like his close friend Al-Ahwal, he led a large circle of disciples and propounded his theories on all questions of the nature and attributes of God.(٣)

Perhaps the greatest of all the Shi'i thinkers of Ja'far's following were Abu Muhammad Hisham b. al-H akam(۴) and 'Ali b. Isma'il al-Maythami.(۵) The former was originally a disciple of Jahm b. Safwan, the Jubrite, but converted to

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۱- See Ibn Nadim, Fihrist, p. ۱۷۶; Najashi, Rijal p. ۲۲۸; Shahrastani, Milal, I, p.۱۸۷

۲- Kashshi, Rijal p. ۱۸۵

۳- Kashshi, Rijal pp.۲۸۰ ff; Najashi, Rijal, p.۳۰۵; Tusi, Fihrist, p.۳۵۴; Ha'iri; Muntaha, PP.۳۲۳-۴. For his ideas, also see Ash'ari, Maqalat, I, p. ۳۴; Baghdadi, Farq, p.۱۳۹; Shahrastani, Milal pp. ۱۸۴. Fakhr ad-Din ar-Razi, I'tiqadat, p.۶۴; Nawbakhti; Firaq, p.۶۶; Ibn Nadim, Fihrist, p.۱۷۷

۴- A mawla of Kinda, but often described as the client of the Banu Shayban, because he attached himself to that tribe. See Kashshi, Rijal pp. ۴۷۵ ff.; Tusi, Fihrist, p.۳۵۳; Najashi, Rijal, p.۳۰۴; Ibn Nadim, Fihrist, p.۱۷۵; Ha'iri Muntaha, pp.۳۲۲ ff.

۵- A mawla of the Banu Asad, he lived in Basra, where he frequented the circles of the local Mu'tazilite mutakallimun. See Najashi, p. ۱۷۶; Ha'iri Muntaha, pp. ۲۰۷; Tusi, Fihrist, p.۲۱۲; Kashshi, Rijal, p.۲۱۳

the Shi'i doctrine and became a most devoted follower of Ja'far As-Sadiq. He must have been quite young at that time, for he lived until the Imamate of 'Ali ar-Rida and was one of his closest companions.(۱)

The theories regarding God and other scholastic questions propounded by these five most important thinkers of Ja'far's period are too lengthy to be examined here. What mainly concerns us at present is their contribution to the doctrine of the Imamate,

which they linked up with fundamental principles of a scholastic nature. A remarkable fact is that although these five thinkers often differ from each other on many questions, their teachings and ideas concerning the Imamate are almost the same. The essence of their doctrine of the Imamate is that the Prophet appointed 'Ali to the Imamate by an explicit designation (nass), and after him, his sons Hasan and Husayn acceded to the Imamate in the same way. This appointment was based on the principle that mankind needs an Imam to lead it on the right path as much as an individual needs intelligence to co-ordinate the activities of his body and to guide him. To guide mankind and preserve it from straying, an Imam must be infallible. This is because the Imam, who is below the status of a Prophet, can receive no revelation from God. Therefore, since he is the infallible guide appointed through the Grace of God, obedience to him is synonymous with obedience to God, while disobedience is the same as

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Kashshi, Rijal p.۲۱۴ -۱

(infidelity.(۱

While so many speculative theologians from among the followers of Ja'far were busy working out the scholastic problems of the time, there were a good many in his circle who concentrated their efforts mainly on legal questions. It has been pointed out earlier that the distinction between jurists and traditionists at this stage, especially among the Shi'is, was not very clear. Nevertheless, there was a difference in their respective interests. Some were more interested in the traditions of a dogmatic and doctrinal nature, others in the traditions concerning practical problems. Thus most of the traditions dealing with legal matters are reported on the authority of Jamil b. Darraj, 'Abd Allah b. Miskan, 'Abd Allah b. Bukayr, Hammad b. 'Uthman, Hammad b. ('Isa, and Aban b. 'Uthman.(۲

All of them belonged to the close circle of Ja'far and are unanimously accepted by all

the Twelver Shi'i writers as the most authoritative transmitters of legal traditions and as the eminent jurists from among the disciples of Ja'far. Kashshi describes them as "the six most reliable authorities among all the followers of Ja'far on legal traditions; on their trustworthiness and profound knowledge of law there has been a complete consensus among the Shi'I scholars."(٣) Kashshi's statement is confirmed by examining Kulayni's al-Kafi, Saduq's Man La Yahduruhu'l Faqih, and Tusi's Istibsar and Tahdhib al-Ahkam. These "Four Standard Books" (Al-Kutub al-Arba') have the same importance for the Shi'ism as the six canonical collections of Sunni Hadith (Sihah as-Sitta) have for the Sunnis.

To this list of the

p: ٤٢٢

١- See Ash'ari, Maqalat, I, p.٤٨, and index; Shahrastani, Milal, I, pp. ١٨٤ ff., and index

٢- Kashshi, Rijal, p.٣٧٥. For the biographical data and detailed information on them, see Kashshi, Rijal, index; Najashi, Rijal index; Ha'iri, Muntaha, passim

٣- Kashshi, Rijal, p.٣٧٥

frequently quoted jurists of Ja'far's period must be added the name of Aban b. Taghlib b. Riyah,(١) an important and outstanding jurist-traditionist, and formerly an associate of Zayn al-'Abidin and Al-Baqir. When he died in ١٤٠/٧٥٧, Ja'far is reported to have said, "I would love to have my Shi'a like Aban b. Taghlib," and "his death grieved my heart."(٢) Aban's name appears in a good number of traditions, mostly of a practical nature.

It is important to note that almost all these jurist traditionists of Ja'far's circle were in continuous attachment to three or at least two generations of the legitimist Imams, either Zayn al-'Abidin, Al-Baqir, and Ja'far, or Al-Baqir, Ja'far, and Musa, while some others who joined Ja'far served the line of the legitimist Imams till 'Ali ar-Rida.

From this brief summary of the activities of individuals and groups working under the leadership of the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq in all the fundamental branches of religious learning, we may deduce two conclusions. First, at that formative stage of Islamic thought and institutions, the contributions made by these people, based on the teachings of Ja'far and his predecessors, provided a solid foundation for the elaboration of the dogma and legal system of Imamate Shi'ism by the later Twelver theologians and jurists. Second, the fact that so many persons, working in various aspects of religious life, chose to gather around Ja'far with the acceptance of his Imamate on the Principle of Nass, set the Imamate stream of Shi'ism well on the way to its

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۱- See Kashshi, Rijal p.۳۳۰; Ha'iri, Muntaha, p.۱۷; Najashi,Rijal pp.۷-۱۰; Dhahabi, Mizan, I, pp.۴-s

۲- See Kashshi, Rijal p.۳۳۰

own distinct character within Islam.

There are many Shi'i creeds preserved for us by the earliest Shi'i sources, such as Kashshi, which explain the beliefs of the Imamate Shi'is during the lifetime of Ja'far as-Sadiq. One of these creeds, pronounced by 'Amr b. Hurayth before Ja'far, reads:

"I would like to describe my religion (dini) and what I believe, so that you may confirm me in my faith. My religion is that I testify that there is no God but God, and Muhammad is His Apostle and Servant. I testify that the coming of the Day of Judgement is not subject to doubt, and that God will resurrect those who are in their

graves. I testify to the obligations of prayer, the paying of the zakat, fasting in the month of Ramadan, and the duty of pilgrimage to the House (Ka'ba) for those who .have the means for it

I testify to the wilaya of 'Ali b. Abi Talib, the commander of the faithful (Amir al-Mu'minin) after the Prophet of God, may the Blessings of God be upon them both, and the wilaya of Al-Hasan and Al-Husayn, the wilaya of 'Ali b. al- Husayn and that of Muhammad al-Baqir, and after his, yours. I testify that you are the Imams. In this religion I live, and in this religion I shall die, and this is the religion by which I worship ".God

:Having heard this, Ja'far declared

This, by God, is indeed my religion and the religion of my fathers, who worshipped" God openly

and in secret; so fear God and hold your tongue from saying anything except that (which is good."(۱)

Similar statements are recorded by Kashshi from Dawud b. Yunus and Khalid b. Bajali.(۲) A detailed account of the Twelver Shi'i beliefs dealing with all articles of faith, whether fundamental (usul) or non-fundamental (furu'), are given by Shaykh Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi, better known as Shaykh as-Saduq (died ۳۸۱/۹۹۱-۲), in his creed entitled Risalat al- 'Itiqadat. Shaykh Saduq is universally acknowledged by the Twelver Shi'a as one of their greatest authorities, and his Risala, one of the earliest extant Shi'i creeds, is accepted as the most authoritative statement of their beliefs. Comparing this Shi'i creed with the standard Sunni creeds, such as Fiqh Akbar I, Fiqh Akbar II, and the Wasiyat Abi Hanafa, one finds that except on the question of the Imamate the differences between the Sunnis and the Shi'is are of the same nature

as, say, the differences between the Asha'ira and the Mu'tazila. The Shi'i views are in most cases the same as those of the Mu'tazila, who certainly remained part of Sunni .Islam, though their rationalistic views were ultimately rejected by the Jama'a

The question of the Qur'an may serve as the best illustration of this fundamental :unity. The Shi'i belief, as stated by Shaykh as-Saduq, reads

Our belief concerning the Qur'an is that it is the Word of God, His revelation sent" down by Him, His speech and His Book ... 'Falsehood cannot come at it from before it or behind

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Kashshi, Rijal, p. ۴۱۸ -۱

.See Kashshi, Rijal, pp. ۴۱۹ f -۲

it. It is a revelation from the Wise, the Praiseworthy' (Qur'an, XLI, ۴۲)... And our belief is that God, the Blessed and Exalted, is its Creator and Revealer and Master and Protector and Utterer. Our belief is that the Qur'an, which God revealed to His Prophet Muhammad, is [the same as] the one between the boards (daffatayn). And it is that which is in the hands of the people, and is not greater in extent than that. The number (of Suras as generally accepted is one hundred and fourteen."(۱

In this statement of Saduq on the Qur'an, two points are worth noticing. First, the Shi'a, like the Mu'tazila, believe that the Qur'an is the created word of God, and not uncreated and eternal as taught by the Asha'ira and officially accepted by Sunni Islam. The second and more important point is that the text of the Qur'an as it is to be found in the textus receptus, which is in the hands of everyone in the shape of a book, is accepted wholly by the Shi'is, just as it is by the Sunnis. Thus the assertion that the

Shi'is believe that a part of the Qur'an is not included in the textus receptus is .erroneous

We are not, however, concerned here with the details of the Shi'i creed or the development of the Shi'i legal and theological systems, which took place in progressive stages, as indeed was also the case in Sunni Islam. Nor is this work meant to discuss the contributions

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.Saduq, Creed, pp.۸۴ f -۱

of the last six Imams after Ja'far as-Sadiq, after which the Imamate Shi'a came to be known as the Ithna 'Ashariya, or the Twelvers. Our purpose has only been to trace the origins and early development of those religious inclinations through which the Shi'is .eventually came to distinguish themselves from the rest of the Muslim community

Keeping in view what has been discussed throughout this work, and looking at the activities of those who gathered around. Ja'far as-Sadiq, we may conclude that the Imamate Shi'is, by the time of Ja'far's death in ۱۴۸/۷۶۵, had acquired a distinct character of their own. The actual disagreements between the Shi'is and the Sunnis in certain details of theology and legal practices were not as important as the "Spirit" working behind these rather minor divergences. This "Spirit", arising from the differences in the fundamental approach and interpretation of Islam, as discussed in Chapter I, issued forth in the Shi'i concept of leadership of the community after the Prophet. It is this concept of divinely ordained leadership which distinguishes Shi'i from Sunni within Islam; and thus it has been on the emergence of this concept that .our attention has been focused in these pages

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In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ
?Are those who know equal to those who do not know
al-Zumar: ۹

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Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ۲۰۰۷, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

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